

"Is there a country that has only one type of drama and one theoretical school? Ridiculous!" **Page 10**



With extravagant facial expressions and exaggerated movements, Roadmetal Sweetbread felt like watching a post-modern silent movie. **Page 11**



"After taking up a DV camera, I changed in many aspects. I became more tolerant. And I am happy." **Page 9**



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The Swans of Swan Lake are Dying



Swan Lake in December, 2000.

Dried silt now covers 67 hectares of what used to be wetlands (inset).

Photo by Photocom

By Zhou Ying

The beautiful birds come from as far away as Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and Siberia in Russia to live through the winter. It is said that the sound of thousands of swans singing over the lake every autumn was once a joyous cacophony.

The saltwater lake, which lies north-east of the city of Rongcheng at the eastern tip of the Shandong peninsula, is the largest winter habitat of swans in Asia, and the local people proudly refer to it as Tian'e Hu, or Swan Lake.

However, when the first group of swans arrived at their winter home on October 26 this year, they found that much of the fertile wetland around the lake where they used to scout for food had disappeared, buried under a blanket of black silt. Water sources were also so heavily silted, many of the thirsty swans could only stand on the dry and barren land, ululating in distress.

According to the Swan Protection Association, a local non-governmental organization, compared with the spectacular scene of nearly 6,000 swans gathered on the surface of the lake in 1992, only 1,200 birds have shown up till now this year. The number of swans returning to the lake has been decreasing by an annual average of 400.

Behind the abrupt decrease, the association claims, are human activities, including dredging silt from the lake, which is dumped on the once sandy shores, and the development of the swan lake resort.

As a result of these projects, the future looks bleak for the swans. Local residents have raised the question to the government: If there are no swans one day in the near future, what will Swan Lake then be?

Locals told *Beijing Today* Tuesday that the swans, after feeding on the lake, would insert their



Yuan Xueshun with a dead swan. Photos by Zhou Ying



A polluted water course, once a source of fresh water for the swans.



A building under construction within the protection zone.



An illegally constructed villa mars the skyline, while fewer and fewer swans now come to the lake.

Photo by Nie Yan

beaks into the wetland sand to drink fresh water. The sand used to be quite soft. "It absorbed the fresh water released from the roots of the black pines in the north of wetland, and therefore the sand is definitely the only water source for the big swans," said one local villager, who declined to give his name.

Now, the sand is covered by a two-meter-deep layer of black, rubbery silt. Some 67 hectares of wetland near the lake have been destroyed in this manner, as a result of dredging by Shandong Mashan Industry Group.

Yuan Xueshun, chairman and founder of the Swan Protection Association, told *Beijing Today* Tuesday that the company, with the permission of the local government, had spent nearly 200 million on dredging since 2000, leaving 4,500,000 cubic meters of silt on the wetland.

"They even built a sand dam to prevent the silt flowing out, which has also stopped fresh water flowing into the wetland from the north," Yuan said, barely able to contain his anger.

With the aid of binoculars, swans could be seen inserting their beaks into gaps in silt, trying in vain to find some fresh water. "What they have done to the swans amounts to maltreatment," Yuan told *Beijing Today*, pointing to the destroyed wetland.

Yuan Xueshun, a 49-year-old man with a thin and weak figure, is famous in the small lakeside town of Chengshanwei. People refer to him as the "swan guard," because he has devoted his tiny courtyard to caring for injured swans.

Inside the courtyard are small basins filled with wheat, cabbage, carrots, rice and edible seaweed and shell powder is scattered on the ground for six injured swans Yuan is taking care of.

"Have more, you'll recover sooner," Yuan said, talking to the swans as if they were his own children.

The Ford Motor Company declared Yuan one of the 13 grass-roots environmental heroes from across China in 2003. The 13 were awarded the 2003 Ford Motor Conservation and Environmental Grants. "After winning the grant, I can now find better means to rescue the swans. I am determined to do my part in helping China's wildlife protection cause," he said.

Each morning and afternoon since the birds came, Yuan rides a motorcycle to the lakeside. After observing the swans with his binoculars, he takes any that are wounded to his home for care. However, finding four dead swans so early in the season came as a surprise.

Following Yuan, *Beijing Today* witnessed his discovery of the fourth swan to have been found dead since September 16. The bodies of the first two were collected by the Forestry Administration of Rongcheng for inspection.

Yuan hid the fourth one under a clump of bulrushes. He explained that he just wanted to protect it from being ruined. "You know, every swan weeps when it dies. Other people cannot understand the meaning of their tears, but I do. I know there is a mood of bitterness and pain," he said, cradling the dead body in his arms.

However, Yan Jianguo, head of the department of wildlife conservation with the administration said that the inspection showed that the two swans died of causes other than a lack of fresh water. "One broke its neck after hitting a high-tension wire, and the other one died of poisoning," Yan explained.

After hearing the result of the investigation released by the Forestry Administration, Yuan was suspicious. "I am the one that found the first dead swan, and I witnessed the miserable situation with my own eyes, how can they be so irresponsible!"

According to Yuan, the eyes of the swan were open and its beak was inserted in a gap in the silt. "I really wonder how they could come to that conclusion, when there were no signs of physical trauma on the body," Yuan added.

An employee of Shandong Mashan Industry Group Corporation, who refused to be quoted by name, told *Beijing Today* Tuesday that they were extremely angry about what Yuan has said to the media.

"What we have done is entirely for the purpose of protection," he insisted, saying that more and more silt was collecting on the bottom of Swan Lake, which was causing great harm to the ecological environment, and threatening the staple food of the swans with extinction.

"That is sheer nonsense!" Yuan fumed after hearing the explanation of the company, the only company in the town that engages in saltwater aquaculture. "I am sure that what they are doing is simply to benefit their trade," he said.

According to Yuan, the more silt there is on the floor of the lake, the lower the production of sea cucumber, which is the company's best selling product. "It is obvious that the only thing in their mind is profit, or they would not have left the silt on the sand with no thought for the swans," Yuan argued, "They are committing a crime in the name of protecting the swans!"

Swan Lake was named a state-level natural protection area in 1998 by the government of Shandong Province, and the swans are attracting growing numbers of visitors to the lake, including tourists and photogra-

phers from all over the country.

But the environment for swans has deteriorated since more than 20 fish powder plants that also belong to Shandong Mashan Industry Group were set up in nearby villages over the past few years.

"As the core part of the protection area, such development is illegal," Yuan said.

"Polluted water from the plants flows directly into the lake," he said, "This poses a great hazard to the swan's habitat."

Qilu Evening News, a Shandong based newspaper, first covered the desperate situation of the swans last Friday. Since then Yuan has given interviews to media from all over the country every day. And the more he exposes the issue to the public, the more enemies he makes in the town.

Last Saturday afternoon, some strangers came and beat Yuan. "I called the police, and after the investigation, it turned out they were employees of the company and the local government," Yuan said.

"I know that they were incited to do so. But if I manage to persuade them to stand on my side, it will be a great loss to the wrong-doers."

Speaking of the future, Yuan vowed he would spare no efforts to fight against those who ruin the environment of Swan Lake. "I want to warn them that Swan Lake belongs to the swans, not them. As long as I am alive, I will not allow anyone to do harm to our best friends," he said.

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Draft Submission Issued on Death Sentence Approval Right

By Chu Meng

Two proposed drafts on revising the organizational law of the People's Court have been completed and submitted to the Supreme People's Court. The changes are aimed at removing the right to impose the death sentence from all levels of lower people's courts, and allowing law officers to carry out their duties independently of administrative rank.

He Weifang, law professor at Beijing University's School of Law confirmed this to *Beijing Today* Tuesday. He said the two drafts, written respectively by himself and professor Fan Chongyi from the Politics and Law University of China, would be examined by the Supreme Court prior to being submit-

ted to the standing committee of the National People's Congress (NPC).

"Since the NPC put revision of the law on its national legislation program at the end of last year, there have been many calls for the Supreme Court to regain its death sentence approval right," the professor told *Beijing Today*.

According to He Weifang, many items of the existing law, which was passed in 1979, are now irrelevant to the category. Meanwhile the number of instances in which the death sentence has been incorrectly issued and then overturned by the Supreme Court has always been high. This indicates that the transfer of the approval right to

lower people's courts went against the strict controls placed on the issuing of the death sentence and led to misuse.

Chen Ruihua, a criminal law expert from Beijing University's School of Law, told *Beijing Today* Wednesday, "The Supreme Court will probably conduct an approval procedure by establishing an exclusive court. In addition, according to an international treaty China signed years ago, countries that retain the capital penalty must issue the death verdict through the highest judicial administration of the country."

Chen said the revised drafts also added the concept of separating law officers from traditional administrative

rank and presented a detailed implementation plan. "Independence of the judiciary is the core of justice. That is to say, members of the judiciary, no matter junior or senior, should operate on an equal status during a trial, not limited by their higher or lower administrative rank," he said.

Under the current situation, members of the judiciary have to report their work to their superiors, which impinges on the relatively isolated character of the conduct of trials and violates the equity concept of justice. The drafts therefore suggest that members of the judiciary have complete trial rights of cases under their charge, so that their verdicts will be free from any interference.

RMB Restrictions on Foreign Banks Further Relaxed

By Qiu Jiaoning

The China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) introduced new measures Wednesday to further liberalize the banking sector, CBRC chairman Liu Mingkang said at a press conference the same day in Beijing.

Foreign banks are now allowed to conduct RMB business in Beijing, Kunming, Xiamen, Xi'an and Shenyang, increasing the number of cities approved for such business from 13 to 18.

Also, profitability qualifications for foreign banks to conduct RMB business in the western and north-east regions of China have been relaxed. If an applicant's branches in China can make an overall profit, branches in the western and north-east regions will now automatically qualify to apply to conduct RMB business. In addition, applications by foreign banks to open branches or business in the western and north-east regions will receive

preferential treatment.

The approval procedure will also be simplified for foreign banking institutions that apply to open representative offices in China. They can now submit applications directly to the CBRC. The CBRC will meanwhile further speed up the approval process for applications to conduct RMB business and establish branches.

From January 2005, foreign banks will be permitted to provide insurance agency services within the scope of their own business and clients after reporting to the responsible department for the record.

By the end of October, 64 foreign banks from 19 countries and regions had established 204 business offices in China, among which, 105 have been authorized to conduct RMB business. Total assets of foreign banks in China are valued at US \$65.9 billion. The profit of these foreign banks amounted to US \$210 million in the first ten months of 2004.

Watchdog Tells SOEs to Concentrate on Core Business

By Chu Meng

China's state-owned assets watchdog has released a list of core businesses of 49 central state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Li Rongrong, chairman of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), announced the list at a press conference in Beijing Tuesday.

Those enterprises, flagships of key industries such as power, oil, iron and steel, telecommunications and the military, are required to concentrate on their major areas of business and withdraw from other areas they have minor interests in.

"State-owned assets should focus on the most important sectors that concern the economy's lifeline instead of being scattered in too many side businesses. The authorities will support more large SOEs to list their core businesses in the stock market after reorganization," Li said.

Li added that such enterprises should also fur-

ther their restructuring to become shareholding companies with standardized corporate governance. The state will maintain control in a few key sectors, while in many other competitive sectors, foreign and domestic private investors can buy into SOEs. Moreover, the authorities will also encourage more central SOEs to seek overseas listings to catch up with international standards.

According to Li, some problems still exist in management buy-outs and in the selling of state assets since the reforms of recent years, especially at county and city levels. To curb such irregularities, the authorities will clarify the responsibilities of local state assets supervisory agencies and enhance relevant supervision.

The SASAC, together with several government departments, jointly launched inspections in August on the transfer of state assets and equities in 21 provinces and municipalities.



China's first sea-rail link, connecting Guangzhou with Haikou, Hainan Island, will make its maiden voyage on December 5. The crew of the ship conducted an emergency drill Sunday.

Photo by Imaginechina

Restrictions Lifted on Low Fuel Consumption Vehicles

By Nie Zhiyang

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) released a medium and long term energy savings plan last Thursday. Under the plan, all unreasonable rules that limit the use and operation of low fuel consumption motor vehicles will be eliminated, and a fuel oil tax reform scheme will be enforced at an appropriate time.

Meanwhile, in order to reinforce the implementation of the plan, the government is also taking into account financial and taxation policies that will encourage the manufacture and purchase of energy-saving vehicles and speed up elimination of high fuel consumption vehicles.

For a long time, what are known as low-and-small autos have been discriminated against by local authorities in terms of traffic regulations and other measures that restricted small-engine cars from being driven on certain roads. Traffic congestion is almost unanimously given as the reason for such restrictions. Consequently, consumers have developed biases against those models of cars.

With energy becoming an increasingly valuable commodity, reducing energy consumption is becoming more and more important. Energy intense industries like steel, petroleum, coal, communication and construction account

for the bulk of consumption, while at the same time there is a high level of wastage caused by low energy efficiency.

On Wednesday, an official from the Beijing Municipal Development and Reform Commission was quoted by *Beijing News* as saying, "Beijing will encourage small automobiles with low emission that comply with the Euro III standard and good power."

However, autos with engines smaller than 1.0 liter will still be banned from driving on Chang'an Avenue and the Second Ring Road, in order to reduce traffic congestion, the official said.

Adoption of Microsoft by Local Government Put on Hold

By Zhang Hongjie / Annie Wei

Within days of the order being placed, a 30 million yuan order by the Beijing government with Microsoft was cancelled Sunday, "at the request of the buyer."

A statement issued on November 17 by the Beijing Government Procurement Office announced the 30 million yuan order, which would allow the municipal government to use all Microsoft software for a period of three years.

However on Sunday, a correction bulletin appeared on the office's website, announcing the cancellation of the order.

The backflip is widely

regarded to be the result of protests by domestic software manufacturers that the procurement office had made the decision in a secretive, closed-door manner and questioned the legitimacy of the action.

Beijing Co-Creat Open Source Software, a domestic software corporation specialized in the Linux operating system, told *Beijing News* last Friday that the government had not kept them informed.

According to the law, government procurement must favor domestic products. Foreign products are only allowed to be purchased where local products are unavailable or do not meet the

required standard.

No further explanation has come from the procurement office, but the bulletin, while not ending Microsoft's hopes of winning the bid, does give hope to domestic corporations.

Xu Kai, from H-line Ogilvy, Microsoft's public relations agent, told *Beijing Today* Monday that Microsoft was still negotiating on the purchase of the software.

Zhang Haiyan, public relations officer of Kingsoft, told *Beijing Today* Monday that overseas software corporations had been aggressive in establishing relations with the government in recent years.

Guangdong to Build Third Nuclear Power Base

By Qiu Jiaoning

Preparations are underway in Guangdong for the construction of a third nuclear power base. The provincial government has begun a preliminary feasibility study of potential coastal sites in the eastern part of the province, *Guangzhou Daily* reported Tuesday.

The sites under consideration are Wuyu in Huilai County, and Jiadong, Haijia and Tianwei in Lufeng. Over 40 experts are involved in the appraisal work on transportation, geological, hydrological and environmental conditions of the four sites. According to the report, all four sites are considered to be suitable but more studies are required.

Daya Bay Nuclear Power Base, the site of the first nuclear power plant in Guangdong, went into commercial operation in 1994 at a cost of US \$4 billion. The plant generates 15 billion kilowatts of electricity annually, 70 percent of which is delivered to Hong Kong, reducing the consumption of coal by 6 million tons each year.

Lingao Nuclear Power Plant currently generates 1 million kilowatts annually. When the second phase, currently under construction, goes into operation, it will have a capacity of 4 million kilowatts.

The Yangjiang Nuclear Power Base will start construction in 2006 and will have a 6 million kilowatt capacity. At an estimated cost of US \$8 billion, it is China's most ambitious nuclear power project yet.

Nuclear power plants supply 13 percent of Guangdong's electricity. It is estimated that the province will account for half of China's nuclear generating capacity when the fourth plant is completed.

China to Reduce Oil Exports

By Sun Yongjian

The Ministry of Commerce announced in November that the oil export in the next year will be cut by two thirds, according to a report in *China Business News* Monday.

The policy adjustment is expected to have considerable influence on relations with neighboring countries such as Japan, North Korea and Pakistan, as well as Cuba and Brazil, the report said.

Cutting the 3 to 4 million tons of oil exports is not expected to substantially affect Japan, the world's third largest consumer of oil. The country relies on imports for 95 percent of its domestic oil consumption. More than 90 percent of is imported from the Middle East, with only 1.7 percent coming from China.

Meanwhile, the 3 million tons of crude oil exported to Japan last year accounted for only 3.3 percent of China's oil exports.

Unlike the "oil purchases exchange" and "oil purchases for technology" to Japan, the purpose of oil exports to Korea is to maintain friendship between the two countries, *China Business News* said. The 1 million tons of oil China provides to north Korea every year represents 70 to 90 percent of that country's oil imports.

NDRC Issues Hot Money Warning

By Sun Yongjian

The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) issued a statement Saturday warning that there were large quantities of overseas "hot money" in China, *China Business News* reported on Monday.

"Foreign liabilities from the first half of 2004 have increased 16 percent, amounting to more than \$200 billion, but nearly 50 percent belonging to short-term liabilities have been found to be hot money," the statement said. Hot money refers to speculative investment of which the source and final destination is uncertain.

The NDRC statement illustrated the cause of the hot money: "The continuously increasing short-term liabilities as well as the considerable amount of profits of foreign invested enterprises which are waiting to be remitted abroad have become a heavy pressure on the adjustment of the exchange rate."

A source from the State of Foreign Exchange revealed that the central bank is ready to establish US dollar Market Maker Rules in order to promote the exchange market liquidity, hence, to deal with the problem of hot money, *China Business News* said.

Skyworth Chairman Arrested in HK for Embezzlement

By Qiu Jiaoning

The chairman and an executive director of publicly-listed Skyworth Digital Holdings were among 10 people arrested by Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) on Tuesday for allegedly embezzling more than HK\$48 million of company funds, the commission said in a statement posted on its website Wednesday.

Skyworth Chairman Huang Hongsheng and his brother, Executive Director Huang Peisheng, were each charged with one count of conspiracy to steal when they went before a Hong Kong court yesterday.

The ICAC said it has evidence the two men worked together with another person to steal nine checks worth a total of over HK\$48 million drawn from the company's bank ac-

count between November 2002 and April 2003.

The eight Skyworth executives also arrested in the ICAC's sweep included two other executive directors, a financial controller, a former director and two associates of the chairman.

Skyworth Group is one of China's largest TV and home electronics makers, and Skyworth Digital, the group's listing vehicle, operates its TV, mobile phone and DVD player manufacturing assets.

On Wednesday, five more people, including a former Skyworth executive director, were arrested by the ICAC in connection with the same investigation.

Trading of the company's stock on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange has been suspended since Tuesday due to the need for "clarification of potentially price-sensitive information", a Sky-

worth Digital statement said.

"Some of Skyworth Digital's directors are actively co-operating with the ICAC and most returned to work after a short investigation," the statement posted on the company's website on Tuesday said.

"Daily operations and marketing activities within the business are proceeding as normal and current executives are cooperating with the investigation," it said.

The Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the statutory body responsible for regulating the accounting profession in the territory, announced on Wednesday it was closely monitoring the Skyworth investigation but it could not confirm if the executives arrested were members of the institute or what actions it might take if they were.



Skyworth Chairman Huang Hongsheng
Photo by Photocom

Beijing-Shanghai High Speed Train Not Likely to Levitate

By Annie Wei

Magnetic levitation technology will not be used for the planned high-speed railway connecting Shanghai and Beijing, Xu Kuangdi, director of the Chinese Academy of Engineering said during a speech delivered to students at China Foreign Affairs University last Friday.

Xu, the former mayor of Shanghai who oversaw the construction of China's first mag-lev train in the city, said the reason was the technology was simply too expensive, costing as much as 400 billion yuan compared to 130 billion yuan for conventional wheel-track technology, the *Beijing Evening Post* reported.

"Although Shanghai's mag-lev railway works well," he was quoted as saying, "it would be risky for the 1,300-kilometer journey from Shanghai and Beijing, crossing many rivers between."

Mag-lev technology would be used for a new rail line between Shanghai and Hangzhou, Xu said, adding it would take only 26 minutes to get from Shanghai Pudong Airport to the neighboring city in Zhejiang Province once the high-tech track was complete. Technology from Germany would be used because it was vastly less expensive than similar technology developed in Japan, he said.

What kind of technology should be used for the Shanghai-Beijing high-speed rail has been a topic of widespread discussion since the project was first proposed in 1997.

Early forerunners for the potentially lucrative contract were Shinkansen, Japan's high-speed bullet train, and two other plans provided by France-based Alstom and a technology venture by Germany's Siemens and Thyssen-Krupp.

The domestic press widely reported on January 7 this year that the State Council, in a meeting held by Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, had agreed to a plan for medium- and long-term railway construction that included adopting wheel-track technology for the Shanghai-Beijing route instead of magnetic levitation.

Later, the Ministry of Railway released a statement refuting the reports that mag-lev technology had been ruled out.

Since Xu's speech, many analysts have speculated that Alstom could get the deal, especially after French President Jacques Chirac visited China in October and met with top Chinese leaders.

Lucy Qian, a communications executive of Alstom's Beijing office, denied such developments to *Beijing Today* on Tuesday.

Xu's secretary, He Zhongwei, was quoted in yesterday's *Nanfang Weekend* as saying the domestic press had mistakenly cast Xu's speech as major news.



Xinhua Photo

Quick Deals May Rescue PriceSmart

The debt crisis of PriceSmart, a leading membership supermarket group in China, could be eased through agreements forged with Britain's B&Q and Taiwan-based President to take over five PriceSmart outlets and inject funds into its affiliated N-mart shops.

Sources from B&Q, the world's third largest home improvement business, and President, the top chain retailer in Taiwan, confirmed agreements had been reached, but PriceSmart declined to comment on the deals on grounds negotiations with the possible partners were still going on.

The President sources said the company had agreed to buy a large share of PriceSmart's N-mart business.

Hu Lifeng from the public relations

department of B&Q China said that the home improvement DIY giant would acquire five PriceSmart stores for 105 million yuan (\$13 million).

Although Hu refused to name the cities where the five PriceSmart stores were located, sources close to both B&Q and PriceSmart said that two of the stores were in Sichuan Province and the others were in Tianjin, Shandong Province and Harbin, Heilongjiang Province.

B&Q said it had clinched a deal with the outlet in Harbin and would ink separate agreements with the other four stores.

The five PriceSmart stores would be converted to B&Q home improvement supermarkets next year, giving the chain a total of 26 outlets in China. (Xinhua)

Hutchison Whampoa Expands Chinese Medicine Ambitions

By Annie Wei

Hong Kong-based Hutchison Whampoa Ltd (HWL) signed a cooperation agreement with Guangzhou Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical Co. last Sunday in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province to set up a new Chinese medicine company.

The two companies would invest 350 million yuan in the new company, the goals of which would be to expand into the overseas market and earn \$200 million in annual sales, said a statement on the website of Baiyunshan, a leading Chinese medicine company best known for its Banlangen brand cold remedy products.

Du Zhiqiang, general manager of Hutchison Whampoa (China), said at the ceremony for the signing of the agreement that the companies would use the new firm to expand the production of Baiyun-

shan's Chinese medicines and promote traditional Chinese medicine around the world.

Du said his company could act as a major gateway for Baiyunshan's products to overseas markets. "Hutchison Whampoa has over 5,000 drugstores abroad," he said.

Li Chuyuan, the former director of one of Baiyunshan's units, was named general manager of the new company.

HWL, helmed by CEO Li Ka-Shing, Asia's richest man, first got into the Chinese medicine market through a deal in 2000 with Tongrentang, a leading traditional Chinese medicine enterprise in northern China, and another with a top Shanghai company in 2001.

Hutchison Whampoa Ltd. had invested a total of over HK\$1 billion in the Chinese mainland, Du was quoted as saying in the *Beijing Morning Post* on Tuesday.

Private Company Buys Two Foreign Automotive Firms

By Annie Wei

Greencool Group, a major domestic refrigerator manufacturer, announced last Thursday in Beijing that it has completed two acquisitions abroad through its overseas company, GRC Capital.

The company assumed complete ownership of struggling British car design firm Leyland Product Development and auto parts maker Gates International, a Greencool statement said.

The acquisitions were the latest steps in Greencool Group's push into the auto industry, after it bought a controlling stake in Chinese bus maker Yangzhou Yaxing Mo-

tor Coach Co. on December 17, 2003, and an auto bearing maker on April 9 this year.

Gu Chujun, CEO of Greencool Group, was quoted in the *China Business Post* last Sunday as saying he believed buying an international auto parts company could enhance his firm's strength in the car industry. Gu said he was looking for a location within China to establish a parts factory capable of generating annual sales of 100 million euros by 2007.

Greencool has also purchased shares in competing domestic firms in the home appliance and electronics market, including Kelon and Meiling, since 2001, he said.

HSBC Not Planning to Invest in Commercial Banks

By Deng Minjie / Pan Hao

Following a meeting of the board of HSBC last Friday, the London-based bank announced it had no present intention of investing in commercial banks in the Chinese mainland.

"We would be spreading our resources too thinly were we to take on any more investment in any commercial bank in China," HSBC Chairman David Eldon was

quoted as saying in a company press release.

"However, we are still interested in China's insurance and assets management sectors."

HSBC has invested nearly \$3 billion in Chinese financial organizations.

The bank said it planned to expand its network in the Chinese mainland to cover 20 cities, doubling the present 10, after the domestic market completely opened in 2007.

Internet Trust Alliance Goes Operational

By Pan Hao

China's top three Web site companies, Sina, Sohu and Netease, jointly announced the regulations of the Internet Trust Alliance, a non-profit organization founded by the firms on September 15 to oversee domestic Internet wireless service providers, at a news conference in Beijing on Monday.

The alliance's inspection

committee would conduct quarterly checks of the performance of member service providers and give those that qualified Certification of Client Trusted Wireless Service (CTWS) titles.

Sina, Sohu and Netease had all obtained CTWS certification for their products, sales and customer service, they said.

Call Me Bank of Beijing Says City Commercial Bank

By Pan Hao

Beijing City Commercial Bank announced last Friday that as of January 1, 2005, it would officially be renamed Bank of Beijing.

A hotline service run by

City Commercial Bank says the change will not affect the bank's activities, management structure or contact information.

Client services will also remain unchanged.

Capital Airport Holding Takes Over Wuhan Airport

By Deng Minjie

A transfer of a 49 percent stake in Wuhan International Airport last Friday gave Capital Airport Holding Company (CAHC) complete ownership of the airport in Hubei Province.

The company, which also owns Beijing's Capital International Airport, assumed a 51 percent stake in Wuhan airport on March 3 this year through an assets recombination negotiated with the Hubei government.

Following the merger, CAHC will assume management control of Wuhan International Airport, one of the six main regional aviation hubs in this country and the second-largest hub in central China.

Construction of a second terminal at the Wuhan airport, at an estimated cost of 2 million yuan, would start once the merger was completed, CAHC general manager Li Peiying announced through a Saturday press release.

New Rules to Standardize Information Disclosure

China's two stock exchanges released revised regulations for stock listing over the weekend, setting new standards for listed companies in information disclosure and other obligations.

The rules, amended from the 2002 version and effective on December 10, will guide listing applicants as well as existing listed companies on matters like disclosure, obligations of board directors, senior executives and

sponsors and risk warning and delisting procedures, sources with the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchanges said.

The new rules further clarify the requirements and contents of information disclosure for listed firms, especially when major transactions or affiliated trade occur. Meanwhile, they also set the exact conditions when listed companies apply to suspend the disclosure to protect their lawful interest.

In the past, obscurity on such matters may have offered some companies excuses to evade disclosure while some may have also found it unfair to reveal information that should have been kept confidential.

Another major change in the new rules is that board members are required to fully exert their functions. Directors and top management must make legal commitments to implement their duties.

"It is necessary to make adjustments to the stock listing rules as the market environment has changed a lot from two years ago and the type of listed companies is also enriched," said Zheng Jing, representative of securities matters at Beijing-based CITIC Securities Co, which is also a Shanghai-listed company.

The new rules are more detailed and easier to follow, Zheng said. (Xinhua)

Tokyo, November 26 (AP) — Japan will phase out development aid to China “in the near future” in light of its rapidly growing economic might, the foreign minister said Friday.

The Chinese government has forecast the country's surging economy will grow 9.3 percent this year, while Japan is still struggling to emerge from a decade-long slowdown.

“We will reduce the amount of Official Development Assistance to China,” Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura said in Parliament. “I think it is only appropriate for China to graduate from ODA in the near future.”

The disparity in growth between China and Japan has long fueled claims that Japan can no longer afford to aid a country that does not appear to require much assistance anymore. Political tensions between the two have also bolstered calls to cut off the aid.

Japanese ODA to China has fallen quickly in recent years. It totaled 108.02 billion yen (US\$1.05 billion; euro790 million) in 2003, less than half of what it was in 2000, the Foreign Ministry says.

The call to end assistance to China comes amid simmering tensions between the two Asian powers.

China has been angered by Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's annual visits to the Yasukuni war shrine. The shrine honors Japan's war dead, but Beijing argues it also pays homage to Tokyo's conquest of China and other Asian

Japan Eyes Eliminating Overseas Aid to China

countries in the 1930s and 40s.

Japan, in turn, has protested China's exploration of gas fields that Tokyo says extend into Japan's exclusive economic zone. Tokyo also recently protested a Chinese submarine's recent intrusion into Japanese waters.

Analyst's Take:

We shouldn't be taken by surprise that Japan is to end Official Development Assistance (ODA) to China. After all, Japan has been making severe cuts in ODA to China since 2001. It is on the grounds of China's rapid development that the theory of China Threat has come along in recent years. As an inexorable trend, Japan has tried to weaken China's economic impact on the Asian economy through yen diplomacy.

In fact, the end of ODA does not make much sense. We can't underestimate the impact of foreign private capital directly influenced by official capital flows, because multinational private investors have to take into consideration not only economic benefit but also political risk.

Generally speaking, the ratio of official investment to private investment is one to eight. Although it isn't necessarily relevant this time, we shouldn't overlook the significance of private capital inflows.

Foreign private investment is proven to have positive effects through technology spillovers and stable investment. Compared with official investment, private investment is more flexible with a decentralized risk. As a result, China should be engaged in improving the investment climate to attract the right levels and types of private investment. It's just time to transfer from official aid to private capital flows.

Japan has adopted a wave-line investment mode, that is to say, its overseas investment will be reduced or ended in order to prevent the target country from becoming a powerful competitor. After eliminating ODA to China, Japan will look at the Middle East, India and Russia.

It's only a matter of time before China graduates out of ODA. But the key is how and when to end it. China and Japan should explore

new modes of investment and cooperation through negotiations so that bilateral trade and relationships can be better developed. For instance, a special purpose fund can be set up for environmental protection or agriculture, which will also provide a favorable climate for financial cooperation.

As to the long-term influence, Japan hopes to increase financial investment in China, which needs more opening-up policies on the financial market. Direct private investment tied to plants and equipment will lead to job drain from its domestic industry. But Japan has to find outlets for its 1,400 trillion yen domestic private capital to avoid potential risks. China, whose fast economic growth will create many opportunities for cooperation, is without doubt the best outlet for that overseas private investment.

— Liu Junhong, associate research fellow of Institute of Japanese Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations

(Qiu Jiaoning)

ASEAN-China FTA to Phase Out Tariffs

November 29 (Kyodo) — Economic ministers from China and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations signed a free-trade agreement Monday that will phase out tariffs on most goods traded between them during the five-year period starting in July 2005, leaving only some 500 items under tariff protection.

High-tariff items that include rice, automobiles and some petrochemical products will be listed as “highly sensitive,” thereby allowing both sides to reduce their tariffs to 50 percent only in 2015, according to ASEAN officials. China additionally reserves some iron and steel as “sensitive products”. Goods other than those in the “sensitive” or “highly sensitive” lists are in the “normal” category. It is for those items that ASEAN and China will begin to slash tariffs from July 1. Total elimination of tariffs on these products will have to be completed by 2010.

Each country is allowed to maintain tariff barriers on “normal” goods only until 2012, China and each ASEAN country have listed up to 400 items in the “sensitive goods” category for which tariff reduction will begin in 2012 with initial tariff cuts of 20 percent in the first year. Tariff barriers in this category have to be reduced to between zero and 5 percent by 2018.

Local Report:

According to Chinese media, the agreement is expected to create a free market zone of more than 1.7 billion people and a total economic value of up to US\$ 2.4 trillion by 2010. The China and ASEAN agreement will be close to the level of FTA of Northern American and Europe.

By economic scale, it's the largest trade grouping of developing countries. The domestic market of China is considered a huge market for ASEAN's tropical primary products and energy, while farm produce, natural resources and manufacturing are what China offers ASEAN.

However, the ASEAN FTA can't rival the FTA of Northern America or the EU over the short term. The FTA of EU is one-level-for-all and the Northern American FTA is one-for-all at the core.

— Beijing Morning Post, November 30 (Deng Minjie)

Indian AIDS Statement



Indian students and bank employees gather in downtown Chennai, South India to commemorate World Aids Day. By the end of 2003, more than 5.1 million Indians had been diagnosed as suffering with HIV/AIDS.

Xinhua Photo

WTO OKs Tax Penalties against USA

Washington, November 27 (AP) — The World Trade Organization imposed penalties yesterday on US exports ranging from apples to textiles in a trade dispute that the Bush administration has struggled to defuse by unsuccessfully urging Congress to repeal legislation protecting American steel makers.

The administration signaled that it would accept the penalties short term, but it also said that the US would protect its own trading interests and expects fair treatment from the WTO.

“We've worked hard to comply with the WTO,” President Bush said, speaking to reporters in Crawford, Texas. “It's important that all nations comply with WTO rulings.”

Bush said he has worked with Congress “to get in compliance,” and “we expect the WTO as well to treat our trading partners as they treat us.”

In Geneva, the 148-nation WTO, which referees international commerce, approved punitive taxes long requested by the European Union and other countries because of a law they say unfairly protects US steel companies and other industries.

EU trade chief Peter Mandelson said that the sanctions could be applied early next year.

The 2000 law, known as the Byrd amendment for its backer, Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., lets the US government fine foreign companies that it judges to be selling goods in America at below-market prices. The revenue is paid to US companies to help them better compete.

Two years ago, the WTO ruled that the law was illegal, saying that it punishes exporters to the United States twice: First they are fined, then those fines are given to their competitors.

The EU was joined in the complaint by Brazil, Canada, Mexico, South Korea, Japan, India and Chile.

Analyst's Take:

Trade conflicts between the EU and US have been heating up in recent years. Since December 2000, trade dispute and lawsuit on Byrd Amendment has kept emerging. As a result, WTO arbitrator ruled in January 2003 that the Byrd Amendment illegal and should be repealed by the end of the year. However, US haven't complied with it at all.

As the US economy entered general election cycle, trade protection policies and good job prospects became their most powerful promise. In order to protect domestic indus-

try and sharpen its trade competitive edge, trade protectionism has been carried out too far in US at that time. In addition, the government has debased the value of the US dollar to lessen budget deficit, which badly hit EU's export trade to US, because trade competition between the two sides mainly depends on price advantage.

The general election cycle has passed, so it's time for the Bush government to take positive steps to solve the problem now. On one hand, US economy has come back on the recovery track with job situation showing a tendency to improve. On the other hand, after the prolonged seesaw struggle, Byrd Amendment has accomplished its objective and given American companies \$750 million in customs levied on foreign competitors since 2001.

Although US may not repeal Byrd Amendment soon, it is bound to make some concessions. After all, any side will get nothing but hurt and loss once trade war launches.

— Zhang Yuncheng, deputy director of Center for Globalization Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations

(Qiu Jiaoning)

Singapore Using Residency as Bait to Lure Rich Foreigners

Singapore, December 1 (AFP) — Rich foreigners can gain immediate permanent residency in Singapore if they park five million Singapore dollars (three million dollars) in local financial institutions, under a new scheme unveiled by the city-state's central bank.

A Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) spokesman said Wednesday these foreigners must also have personal assets worth at least 20 million dollars to qualify but they will still go through routine immigration checks.

Spouses and children aged under 21 will also be able to become permanent residents, the spokesman said.

In announcing the “Best Home” scheme in a speech Tuesday, MAS chairman Goh Chok Tong said it was aimed at attracting wealthy foreigners to the southeast Asian nation as part of plans to expand its financial services activities.

Lawmakers Grill Citigroup Japan Chief over Private Bank Scandal

Tokyo, December 1 (Reuters) — Citigroup's top executive in Japan endured unprecedented questioning by lawmakers on Tuesday over a scandal at the firm's private bank in the country, the latest turn in a high-profile case that has embarrassed the world's biggest financial company.

Citibank Japan CEO Douglas Peterson told a parliamentary finance committee that lax corporate governance and an “aggressive sales culture” were behind abuses at the private banking unit, ordered to be closed by regulators in September.

“What's very important now is that we learn from those mistakes,” Peterson said after repeating a public apology issued by Citigroup Chief Executive Charles Prince in Tokyo last month.

It was the first time the Upper House committee had called a non-Japanese witness, reflecting the intense public interest generated by the case.

The private bank was cited for widespread violations including manipulative sales practices and a failure to screen out money laundering, and its closure was one of the harshest punishments issued to a foreign financial firm in Japan.

OECD: Bank of England Needs Four Interest Rate Increases

Paris, December 1 (FT.com) — The Bank of England should raise interest rates four more times by the end of next year, taking its main interest rate to 5.75 percent, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The organization of 30 industrialized countries confounded market expectations that the current interest rate cycle had probably peaked at 4.75 percent.

The OECD analysis came on the day Mervyn King, governor of the Bank of England, gave an upbeat message on the UK economy to the Treasury select committee, and better than expected data was reported by the Nationwide building society and the CBI employers' organization.

In its twice-yearly Economic Outlook, published on Tuesday, the OECD, based in Paris, said that the cost of borrowing needed to rise next year because there was no spare capacity in the British economy to mop up the threat of inflation and wage pressures.

“The slowdown and continuing low inflation warrant a pause in monetary tightening, although further tightening may be needed during 2005, in particular due to increasing pressures from the labour market,” the OECD said.

LG Philips LCD Announces \$5 Bn Investment despite TV Glut

Seoul, December 1 (AFP) — LG Philips LCD is to invest \$5 billion in new facilities to produce next-generation flat panel displays in order to strengthen its global market leadership.

The company said it would invest 5.29 trillion won (\$5 billion) in building a “seventh generation” TFT-LCD fabrication plant in Paju, some 30 kilometers north of Seoul by early 2006.

Production at the plant will start sometime in the first quarter of 2006, using 45,000 input sheets of “mother glass” every month that will gradually rise to 90,000 depending on market conditions.

Each mother sheet can produce eight 42-inch TFT-LCDs or six 47-inch wide TFT-LCDs used primarily for flat panel TVs and large monitors.

The group's huge capital expenditure comes at a time when LG Philips LCD faces falling profits amid a supply glut and weak prices as competitors from Taiwan flood the market with low-priced products.

Microsoft to Open Research Center in Bangalore, India

Seattle, December 1 (AP) — Microsoft Corp. is further expanding its presence in India with plans to open a research center in Bangalore.

The latest Microsoft Research campus will open in January 2005, the Redmond, Wash.-based software giant said Tuesday. The researchers in India will focus on ways to create, store and search information in multiple languages, as well as technology for use in emerging markets and other specialties.

Microsoft already operates research campuses in Beijing; Cambridge, England; Redmond; San Francisco and Silicon Valley.

The company decided to add an Indian campus to take advantage of promising computer science students coming out of universities there, said Rick Rashid, a vice president in charge of Microsoft Research. The company hopes to hire a couple dozen researchers over the next year, he said.

By Dong Nan

The Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) kicked off its second round of its search for the theme song to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games this Tuesday.

The first leg of the tuneful campaign was run in 2003 and five annual sessions will be held before the Beijing Games begin. One final winner, the official song of the 2008 Olympics, will be chosen from the 50 songs selected from those sessions.

The ideal song would not only reflect Chinese culture and the Olympic spirit, but also become popular with

Hunt Underway for 2008 Olympic Theme Song

people around the world, BOCOG has said. The campaign was jointly organized by BOCOG, the Chinese Musicians Association under the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and Radio Beijing, the capital city's leading broadcaster. Beijing

Music Radio under Radio Beijing has been entrusted to handle the project's daily operations.

The final deadline for song submissions for the current session is April 25, 2005. Music books, lyrics and recorded songs are all welcome

(the deadline for lyrics is February 28, 2005), and the results will be published in June next year. Awards of 10,000 yuan will be granted for every winning song. Details about the song campaign can be found at www.beijing-olympic.org.cn.

Air Marshall Assaulted by NPC Deputy



Wang Tingjiang

By Liu Zhaoxi

An police officer protecting a plane was beaten up by a deputy to China's National People's Congress (NPC) and several companions on Saturday at Linyi Airport in eastern China's Shandong Province.

When the plane, bound from Guangzhou to Qingdao with a stop at Linyi, landed at the regional airport around 10 pm, flight attendants asked disembarking passengers to present their tickets on their way out. But one person in line refused to turn over his ticket, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported on Tuesday.

A report from Shandong Airlines, one of the carriers of the flight, identified the man as Wang Tingjiang, a serving deputy to the NPC and a public official in Linyi, the newspaper said.

Wang launched into a stream of curses about having to show his ticket and then started throwing punches at the plane's chief attendant and flight police officer Zhang Qiang, who had rushed over to break up the fracas. People travelling with Wang used their cell phones to summon friends to the site.

About half an hour later, a group of men stormed into the airport's waiting area, smashed through the glass wall separating the waiting and boarding areas and rushed onto the plane. They proceeded to pull Zhang off the plane and onto the tarmac and beat him for nearly five minutes.

They then surrounded Wang and led him out of the airport as Zhang lay unconscious, bleeding from his nose and mouth, *Beijing Youth Daily* said.

Wang admitted to the *Beijing News* on Tuesday that his subordinates had assaulted Zhang, but denied that they did so at his request. He explained that at the time, he was angry about the high price of the air ticket and annoyed when the flight attendant asked him to show his ticket after he had already presented his boarding pass.

Wang confessed to using foul language in public, but denied hitting the flight attendant.

Zhang remains in the hospital and local police have taken up the case. Wang hoped to resolve the matter by legal means, the *Beijing News* said.

Wang Tingjiang, 53, is a Linyi local, according to information on the official NPC website. He gained some national reputation after donating 6 million yuan of personal property to his home village in 1989, and later was reported to have helped raise his village from poverty.



Wang and the assailants walk away after the beating.



Photo by Lou Qiyong

Around Asia on Two Wheels

By Pan Hao

A remarkable guest came to town on Monday evening for a brief stop-over on an endurance journey across many cultures—a looping bicycle trek through Eastern Europe and Asia.

Stanley Brodaric, a Slovenian American, is as notable for his age as he is for his bravery and determination. Brodaric is 72 years old.

He began his adventure in Magadan, Russia in August and crossed Siberia, Mongolia and China's Inner Mongolia before arriving in Beijing. "Snow is right behind me," Brodaric told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday.

"I will be here five or six days more to get my visa done, and go to the hospital to have an examination to make sure my body is all right. I have to have my bicycle fixed, some of the kits are completely worn out."

Fully loaded, his sturdy bicycle looks like a small truck with nearly 80 kilograms of gear carried on a small rear trailer.

"I got stuck at a small place near Zhangjiakou last Friday, and I had flat tire and only one pedal left. But eventually a good repairman helped me out there," he said.

Brodaric said he had never felt fear on the journey, for which he spent over six months preparing.

"One of the reasons that I am doing this is because I want to find my place in the universe, and I know there is an instinct inside me to be dominant," he said.

This is not the first time Brodaric has saddled up for a long bicycle journey. Two years ago, he rode 3,000 kilometers from South America to Alaska, the US' northernmost state.

He said he was planning to continue his journey sometime next week, heading towards Southeast Asia.

Passing Cop Takes Out Armed Robber

By Wang Fang

An unarmed policeman managed to subdue and capture a robber wielding a loaded pistol on Wangfujing Avenue on Sunday night.

When Bai Chao, a 27-year-old officer at the Beijing Railway Station police section passed the famed shopping street at 9:50 pm on Sunday, he saw a group of people rushing out from an air ticket booking office, some shouting for help to catch a thief.

Bai told *Beijing Youth Daily*, "I saw the robber was holding something and it looked like a pistol. I had to disarm him before he shot anyone."

The policeman tackled the thief and knocked the gun out of his hand. Once he recovered the firearm, Bai saw it was loaded.

An employee from the Aitebo booking office who followed Bai to the police station after the arrest identified the thief as Zhang Peng, the ticketing agent's former manager.

Zhang, a native of Gaobeidian, Hebei Province, quit his job at the Aitebo Ticket Office in October 2003 over disagreements with his boss. After plotting revenge by robbing the office, he bought a pistol and 13 bullets in Qinghai Province on November

18 this year for 6,800 yuan, *Beijing Youth Daily* said.

He returned to Beijing last Thursday and spent three days preparing for the crime.

"He threatened to kill me if I did not open the safe," an office staff member who faced the barrel of Zhang's gun told *Beijing Youth Daily*.

"I had to give him a bag, containing 18,501 yuan. When he got the money, he quickly ran away and my co-workers chased after him and shouted for help."

Zhang told the police that if he had not been spotted by Bai, he would have been long gone with the cash.

Murky Air Mars Capital's Skies

by Liu Zhaoxi

The heavy fog that fell on Beijing this week is expected to lift today, giving way to light rain and even snow.

On Wednesday, about 200 flights and 10,000 passengers were delayed at Beijing Capital airport when flights were postponed due to poor visibility, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported. Road accidents caused by the same problem brought traffic to a crawl on several major local highways during the two-day fog-in, local media said.

A meteorology expert who would not give her name told *Beijing Today* that the fog was likely caused by two factors—stagnant air and increasing atmospheric humidity. In such conditions, pollution particles in the air were more likely to collect and worsen the situation, she said.



The fog has caused traffic snarls and flight delays.

Photo by Jia Ting

Actor Doles Out Info, Condoms for AIDS Day

By Zhang Hongjie

Star of the stage and screen Pu Cunxin did his part for World AIDS Day on Wednesday by passing out free condoms to pedestrians coming in and out of the Wangfujing Subway Station.

Hundreds of people received free condoms during the activity. Many surrounded Pu, expressing their determination to fight AIDS and asking for his autograph.

"All of society should show more care for AIDS patients," said Pu, urging "unbiased treatment of HIV carriers and AIDS patients."

A recent survey indicates



Pu Cunxin

Photo by Li Shuzhuan

that HIV is spreading in Beijing, with diagnosed cases jumping to two to three per month from two to three per six months a few years ago. Sex is the source of 20 percent of infections, three times above the national average, the survey shows.

The theme of this year's AIDS Prevention Day was "Women, girls, HIV and AIDS!"

Wednesday's activity was organized by the Beijing Sci-Tech Report and co-sponsored by the China Population Publicity Center, *Beijing Youth Daily* and UNAIDS, the joint United Nations program on HIV/AIDS.

Police Officers Jailed for Miyun Bridge Stampede

By Xinhua/Dong Nan

Two officers in charge of the police station of suburban Miyun County were sentenced last week to three years in jail each for dereliction of duty during a crowd stampede in which 37 people died and more than 20 were injured earlier this year.

The Beijing No. 2 Intermediate People's court announced the sentences of officers Sun Yong and Chen Bainian last Friday.

The stampede took place on February 5 during Lantern Festival, a traditional part of Spring Festival, on a bridge in Miyun's Mihong Park. Several of the 37 who died were suffocated or crushed and others fell off the bridge.

The day of the incident, a large crowd had collected on the bridge to see the brightly lit lanterns displayed there, witnesses told the court. The accident was later proved by the procuratorate to have been the result of criminal malfeasance.

Sun Yong, then chief of the Miyun County police station, and Chen Bainian, station commissar at the time, failed to dispatch enough officers to control the flow of visitors at the bridge, the court said.

When the chaos began, there were no police at the bridge to prevent the situation from getting out of hand.

Another 12 people were previously punished for their roles in failing to prevent the accident. They were either fired or received administrative demerits or warnings.

Xia Qiang, secretary of the Miyun County Committee of the Communist Party of China, was disciplined within the Party over the accident. County head Zhang Wen admitted his culpability and resigned.



Zhang Xiulan observed the court proceedings through the Internet on Tuesday.

Photo by Zhang Chenggang

Internet Brings Court TV to Chaoyang

By Liu Zhaoxi

A seemingly run-of-the-mill hearing at Chaoyang District Court on Tuesday was actually one for the domestic history books, as it was the first court session in China to be broadcast live on the Internet.

The case, a lawsuit filed by apartment residents against local government bodies over excessive noise outside their building, started at 9 am and lasted two-and-a-half hours. The public was welcome to tune in to the hearing by visiting the court's official website and clicking the "court hearing live" sidebar. The broadcast was viewed 270 person-times that morning, a report on the Chaoyang District government's website said.

Another report on the site explained that cases involving matters of national security, business secrets and individual privacy would not be broadcast online in the future. Court staff were required to consult parties involved before running live broadcasts and the court would call off broadcast plans if any party refused, it said.

The live online broadcasts were intended to highlight and provide access to influential cases drawing close public attention, the report said.

China's First Bentley Owner Loses Bid for Full Refund

By Wu Chen

Just seven months and 4,089 kilometers after Guo Yong became the first person in China to buy a Bentley automobile in August 2002, the car sprung a sudden problem in its steering system to Guo's chagrin. Though company repairman fixed the break, Guo still filed suit against Bentley Motors of Britain and Beijing, but things did not go his way when the presiding court issued its judgment last Friday.

The Beijing Second Intermediate People's Court decided to turn down Guo's demands to return the Bentley Arnage RL car and get a full refund of the purchase price plus related fees to a total tune of more than 5.1 million yuan.

In its verdict, the court noted that, after the car was repaired, the plaintiff had continued driving it for another 6,000 kilometers without incident, therefore leaving him with no reason to return the vehicle.

When *Beijing Today* first reported on the case on June 18, Yang Younan, one of Guo's lawyers, said his client had asked three automotive engineering experts from Tsinghua University to examine the car's steering system.

A report compiled by the experts was presented to the court, but the experts themselves were not present, so the judge ruled the report inadmissible as evidence.

Guo, a real estate developer, bought the car at the Beijing International Auto Show in August 2002 for 4.68 million yuan.

By Liu Zhaoxi

A proposal to raise the costs of admission to six World Cultural Heritage sites in Beijing – the Forbidden City, Summer Palace, Temple of Heaven, Great Wall at Badaling, and two Ming Dynasty Imperial Tombs – came under scrutiny at a public hearing held on Tuesday.

Under the plan, high season ticket prices would be hiked considerably, to 100 yuan at the Forbidden City from the present 60 yuan, 80 yuan at the Summer Palace, up from 30 yuan, 80 yuan at the Great Wall and 50 yuan at the Temple of Heaven.

A press release handed out at the hearing by the Beijing Municipal Commission of Development and Reform, the local department in charge of the matter, stated the proposal's main goal would be to better cover the costs of running and protecting the sites. "The increased admission income will all be used for maintenance," the commission pledged in the release.

Most of the participants at the public hearing, who included laypeople, officials from government agencies and site administration offices and experts, came out in favor of the price hikes, but did raise several areas of concern. Some public representatives said the margins of change were too large, mostly in the cases of the Summer Palace and the Temple of Heaven, both places where locals frequently go to do exercise, not to tour the sights.

The administrations of those two parks promised to temper the effect of the increases on Beijing citizens by limiting the prices of monthly passes to less than twice the price of one regular ticket, the commission press release said.

Officials confirmed at the hearing that the prices of monthly passes would not be allowed to climb too high, without disclosing any specific plans.

The commission did not state when it would issue its final judgment at the hearing.

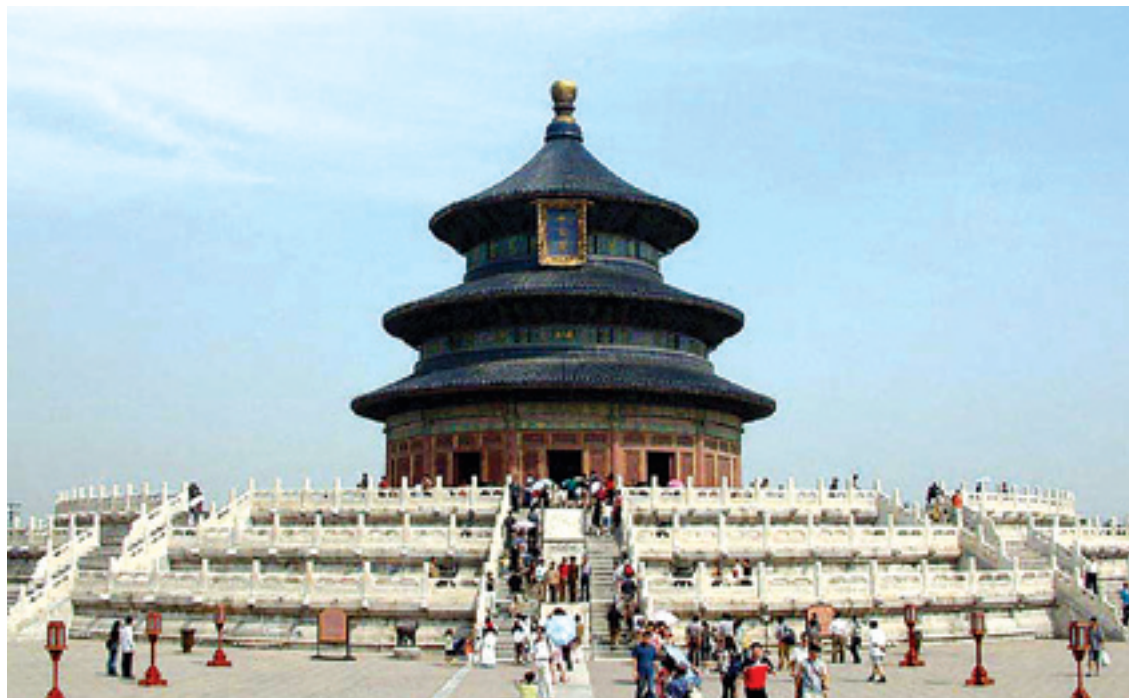
The costs of admission to the six sites in question, from 10 to 60 yuan, are low compared to many other World Heritage sites around China. A ticket to the Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang, Gansu Province costs 100 yuan, while entry to the Old Town of Pingyao in Shanxi Province runs 120 yuan per person.

Discussion of the potential prices has not been limited to the hearings, as people around the city have been talking the past week about the benefits and costs of higher prices at Beijing's most famous sites.



Most of the participants at Tuesday's public hearing came out in favor of the price hikes.

Talk of Ticket Hikes at Famed Sites Gets Mixed Response



The cost of admission to the Temple of Heaven may be hiked 35 yuan to 50 yuan.

Ning Zequn, professor in the department of recreation and tourism at Beijing Institute of Tourism: **Raising admission will help protect the sites**

I favor the proposal to raise admission prices. Any damage done to world cultural heritage sites is irreparable, because such places cannot be rebuilt. For these sites, protection should be given priority over tourism. In many foreign countries, people pay more attention to protecting historical sites than making money out of them. Raising admission will help to limit numbers of tourists and too many tourists crowding at sites can easily cause damage to Beijing's legacy. For example, exhaled human breath can, over time, be corrosive. Research should be done to assess the number of tourists a historic site can feasibly accommodate, and then admission rates can be calculated based on that number. It would be a good idea for

these sites to offer regular free days targeted at certain groups of people.

Wu Bihu, professor at Beijing University: **Raising admission is not necessarily beneficial**

High admission costs will not necessarily control tourist flow. People spend hundreds, even thousands, of yuan to take trains or planes to Beijing, with the Forbidden City and Great Wall clearly in mind as places they have to go. Even if tickets to these places are raised to 100 yuan, people still will go. It also is not necessary to raise admission to generate more funds for preserving these sites, because most of them are not lacking in money, which they receive from China's national relic protection department. Beijing could try a free admission policy like that offered in cities in some developed countries.

(from the *Beijing Times*)
Li Gao, assistant to the administrative director of the Summer Palace: **State funds only cover part of our maintenance costs**

Some people are saying that cultural heritage sites depend on state financial allocations for money, not on admission income, which is not accurate. Government funds usually only go towards major maintenance projects and account for only 30 percent of a site's total maintenance expenses, if not less. It takes a lot of money to preserve historic buildings and grounds. At the Summer Palace, we need more than 20 million yuan every year just to purchase water to fill Kunming Lake.

(from the *Beijing Daily Messenger*)

Wang Shiren, relics protection expert: **Different areas should have different admission rates**

The main reason for raising admission is to control the amount of tourists and therefore better protect historic sites, which is understandable. But world cultural heritage is something that benefits the public, so ticket costs should not be too high. I would advise against single, sweeping adjustments. Different prices can be assigned to different areas or structures within one site. In the Summer Palace, for instance, admission to recreation areas, like Nanhu Island, is already pretty high, but the cost of access to Foxiang Pavilion still has room to be raised. If admissions are raised, legislation should be passed to make sure a certain portion of the increased income is applied to protection and maintenance of the sites, such as through setting up a relics protection fund.

Wayne Craig, British tourist: **Prices set too high could stop Chinese people from going**

Raising admission rates would not affect me at all. So long as ticket prices are not raised too high, I don't think it will stop foreign visitors from coming. You go to any tourist site in the world, they charge you money. For tourists, it is expected. But high admissions could stop Chinese people from going. These sites... mean more to Chinese people than to me. They are important landmarks of the country, and if Chinese people cannot enjoy them, that will be a problem.



Wreckage from last week's crash in Baotou which killed 55

Commentary

Recent Crash Casts Doubt on Aviation Industry Reforms

by Chu Meng

The past week, indeed the past few months, have been tragic and bruising for China's aviation industry. Last Sunday morning, a small plane crashed shortly after it took off in Baotou, Inner Mongolia, killing the more than 50 people on board.

The accident is one in a series of incidents, mostly smaller and less deadly, that have raised fears about air safety and cast doubt on domestic carriers following the industry regrouping orchestrated by the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) in July.

The day after the Baotou crash, another small plane experienced problems with its landing gear in Jilin Province, but managed to land without incident. On Tuesday, an Air China plane slid off the runway at Kunming Airport in Yunnan Province into a nearby patch of grass. In October, two boys who managed to sneak into a hanger at that same airport climbed into the wheel well of a plane. When the plane took off, one fell to his death, while the other nearly died of exposure during the hour-long flight.

History has not been kind to CAAC's efforts to restructure China's airline industry. Within a month of the administration's first regrouping in 2002, hundreds died in two major plane crashes.

"Recently, people have been focusing intensely on the crashes and on China's whole civil aviation industry," Xu Guangjian, vice dean of the China School of Public Administration of Renmin University commented. "People started to doubt the safety of Chinese airlines and see weak spots in the reform of the aviation industry."

Nine state-owned airlines directly affiliated to CAAC were merged into three main aviation groups – China Eastern Airlines Group, China Southern Airlines Group and Air China Group – in 2002. This July, CAAC transferred the administration rights to 90 airports and their personnel, including public security personnel, from its own hands to local governments.

Though intended to streamline the industry, these moves have increased potential risks of flow of inaccurate information through new, untested channels, security check oversights and maintenance failures.

There is no denying that air crashes are caused by many factors. But this new system

will have an unquestionable impact on safety. As a CAAC official once explained, the domestic air industry used to be like a big family all living in one home, while the new scheme has everyone living alone. Therefore, determining who should supervise each section of the system and how they should do so has become a key concern.

Chinese authorities and airlines are working hard to improve the industry's safety standards and management methods, but for now, priority should be put on establishing efficient systems for judging responsibility for safety and security issues.

Xu noted that while the aviation market was booming, the industry faced some serious shortages, namely of skilled pilots and maintenance crew, infrastructure and efficient administration mechanisms. All are factors that will only have negative influence on flight safety.

"China's top civil aviation authority has vowed to further step up flight security management and improve the flight safety record. Air safety control has become the top priority of the CAAC in its efforts to regroup the nation's civil aviation industry in 2004," senior administration official Yang Yuanyuan said at a news conference shortly after the Baotou crash.

A three-tiered safety regulation spelling out responsibilities for top, regional and local safety supervision offices would be set up, Yang said, adding safety standards would be upgraded and airlines encouraged to adopt safety standards above those required by the government to ensure passengers' security.

Xu said a system for inspecting the operational safety of foreign airlines that serve Chinese destinations had been set up and local governments had assigned concrete responsibilities to personnel responsible for security of airports and flights. The CAAC would remain in charge of the industry and should set clear rules for determining who was to be held responsible in cases of accidents in which lives or property are lost, he said.

The Baotou crash and other incidents have shone a lot of light on civil aviation in China and domestic carriers. If that light manages to wake up the country's administrators and companies, it could bring about a better day for passengers and China's aviation industry.

(Translated from Xinhua News Agency article)

Soundbites

"This election was stolen in broad daylight. It's not enough to condemn the ballot as flawed or even illegitimate, as many international organizations have done, my preferred word is 'criminal,'" said Stephen Sestanovich, a former US ambassador, regarding the recent elections in Ukraine.

His charges came as hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians took to the streets protesting the election which many saw as rigged and biased in favor of Moscow-backed Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich. Official counting gave the victory to Yanukovich, despite polls showing clear leads throughout the race for rival and West-supported liberal Viktor Yushchenko.

"Naturally I was very disappointed and surprised, yes. He is an independent businessman. He is a grown man, and I don't get involved with his activities and he doesn't get involved in mine," the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said of his son, Kojo.

Annan made the statement to reporters on Monday after it was revealed last week that his son had continued to receive payment from the Swiss company Cotecna, where he had once worked as a consultant, after his employment ended. The firm is now under investigation for alleged corruption in Iraq.

Estimates suggest Saddam Hussein's government raised more than \$21.3 billion in illegal revenue under an oil-for-food program run at one time by Cotecna.

"We genuinely believe that, if we get enough people participating, we'll be able to disprove, once and for all, the notion that someone else was involved in the (JFK) assassination," said Kirk Ewing, lead game designer for Traffic Games.

The company has come under strong fire for its new game, JFK Reloaded, in which players assume the role of Lee Harvey Oswald, who most believe to be the triggerman behind the 1963 assassination of US President John F. Kennedy.

Speaking at the game's launch party last week, Ewing explained he wanted to introduce the event to a whole new generation of people, some of whom still believed that there were others involved in a conspiracy responsible for the president's death.

"If the renminbi appreciates under international pressure, it will trap China with low growth, low interest rates and low inflation but a strong currency," said Andy Xie, chief Asian economist for American investment giant Morgan Stanley.

The economist cited Japan's lasting financial troubles and suggested the revaluation of the Chinese yuan could cause domestic firms to relocate to cheaper production markets. Such a move would drop interest rates and shift investment into real estate and stocks, which could damage China's economy and push it into an 'economic bubble' similar to that from which Japan was still struggling to recover, Xie said.

(Edited by Andy Tait)

Surveys Uncover Details of Domestic Violence

263 women died of domestic violence last year.

By Dong Nan

Domestic violence in China is the direct cause of 100,000 couples getting divorced in the last 10 years, and reported domestic violence is increasingly on the rise in China. Last year in the whole nation, 263 women reportedly died of domestic violence.

November 25 was International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. According to the Program of Action for the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the definition of violence against women is: Any gender-based violent actions that occur in public life or private life, including a threat to use this kind of action, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of freedom. This kind of violent action will cause damage and suffering to women physically, mentally or sexually.

Violence against women is a worldwide problem. According to the statistics of the World Bank, 25-50% of women around the world have suffered maltreatment closely related to their body in the 20th century. About a quarter of women in the world have suffered domestic violence.

According to a survey of Zhejiang, Hunan and Gansu provinces conducted by the Network and Research Center for Combating Domestic Violence, China Law Society, violence existed among 34.7% of married couples, with mental violence occupying the highest percentage and physical violence coming next. Particu-

larly in recent years, 15 provinces in China have formulated local regulations regarding prevention and curbing of domestic violence, which suggests that violence against women is finally becoming recognized in China as a major social problem.

Neglected mental violence

The problem of mental violence is easily overlooked. According to statistics from the Center, China Law Society, in 65.9% of families, husbands would sometimes not talk to their wives. In 26.9% of families, husbands would slam doors or smash things heavily when they got angry. In 28.9% of families, husbands abused their wives, and in 21.7% of families, husbands threatened to beat their wives – all of these actions amount to mental violence.

Some husbands will use their children as instruments to control their wives. According to Feng Yuan, director of the Center, she had witnessed many husbands forbid their wives to see their children in order to make their wives obedient. Sometimes husbands would forbid their wives to visit their parents and friends as well. According to Feng, women who have suffered long-term mental violence feel depressed and lack self-esteem.

“There are more and more complaints from women about mental violence,” said Zhao Longzhen, chairwoman of the Women and Children Center, Zhejiang Province, “the horror is unimaginable until you have seen real cases.”

“The horror is unimaginable until you have seen real cases.”
– Zhao Longzhen, chairwoman of the Women and Children Center, Zhejiang Province



A victim of domestic violence lies in hospital in Zhuanghe, Liaoning Province.

Photo by Photocore

One of stories she told was quoted on the homepage of the Center – a woman who lived in Zhejiang Province had been married for more than 20 years. Both she and her husband were officials, and they had a son who was studying in college.

But the apparently decent and happy family had a skeleton in the cupboard – the husband had a mistress, and he had refused to have sex with his wife almost

since their son was born.

“For the good of our son,” the woman chose to maintain the marriage. But the husband only pretended to be a good husband in public, and never spoke a word to her at home.

However, mental violence is easily neglected and hardest to solve. According to Feng, this kind of violence does not have a specific conception in law. Sometimes, people have to judge whether it

was “violence” by using common sense. This makes it difficult for women to seek help.

It was also hard for women to collect evidence to prove their suffering as there are no scars or bruises in such cases. Even if they consult police or help centers, it’s hard sometimes to judge the situation. Many wives lose lawsuits against their husbands because of a lack of evidence. More likely, women who suffer from mental violence simply tolerate it and tend to “keep it in the family,” or “for the good of our child.”

“Just as women have the right to not suffer violence, they have the right to pursue family life,” said Xu Weihua, a researcher of the research Center. “Some women would like to keep the family and choose to live with their violent husbands. This is really a dilemma. What we can do is to provide assistance to them and what course of action to take finally rests with themselves.”

Ineffective conciliation

According to a survey by The All-China Women’s Federation in rural areas, when suffering domestic violence, 50% of women will choose to let relatives or local officials reason with their husband, 33% will “resort to violence against violence” and 7% will go to the police.

Although there are no specific statistics in cities, according to Feng, most women suffering domestic violence will seek help from relatives and friends instead of seeking help from social groups or the police as many believe “do not wash your dirty linen in public.”

In settling issues of domestic violence, many still hold the view that domestic violence is a private matter, unsuitable for intervention, and some even think that “a woman is beaten because of her own mistakes.”

A survey by The All-China Women’s Federation last year found about 43% of respondents thought “sometimes, a husband can beat his wife or punish her for being unreasonable”, and 25.5% chose “a husband can beat his wife as long as she did something that betrayed him.” “A husband has the right to beat his wife” is still rooted in many people’s minds.

Therefore if a women suffering from domestic violence seeks help from relatives, friends, village or community officials and leaders, she might not get proper help.

Hongfeng Women Consultancy Center, a Beijing-based organization that provides psychological assistance to women, studied 100 cases of women who suffered domestic violence and found that 58 of them found reconciliations by relatives and friends ineffective. Five com-

plained that after the reconciliations, the violence they suffered was “even more serious.” Twenty-four felt reconciliations had “some temporary effect” and six said that help from relatives and friends settled the problem.

Sometimes, according to Feng, when conciliation fails and fails again, women who suffer domestic violence one time too many will resort to violence to end their pain: mostly suicide, but some even kill their husband. However, under Chinese law, there is no specific regulation dealing with such problems, and so domestic violence does not count as a mitigating factor in court.

Comprehensive harm

Of course, domestic violence causes great harm to women’s health. Aside from external body wounds, it brings problems with reproductive health including unexpected pregnancy, unsafe abortion, premature birth, sexual dysfunction and infection with sexually transmitted diseases.

Moreover, violence against women can cause spiritual depression, ill temper, physical disability and loss of the will to live.

According to Feng, domestic violence also influences the next generation, as women who suffered violence might not be able to take care properly of their children’s health and nutrition. Children who live in a family full of violence are likely to be unsociable and aggressive.

Domestic violence creates economic losses for society. Although there are no statistics for China, research in Canada in 1995 found that domestic violence increased medical care expenses and decreased the productive ability of many women. According to the research, economic losses totaled \$1.1 billion that year.

“Thus violence against women is also a public issue,” said Feng. “It shows inequality of rights between men and women, and this inequality results in men’s control over and discrimination against women, regarding women as private property that can be possessed and controlled willfully, and ignoring women’s personal dignity.”

From 2000, the Center tried to help build shelters and provide training for local workers on women’s issues in Hunan, Hubei, Jiangsu and Liaoning provinces. But they encountered problems as there is no specific official organization to deal with this problem. Their partners varied: communities, civil affairs bureaus, police, hospitals and women’s associations.

“Domestic violence has not had enough attention in China, and we still have a long way to go,” said Xu Weihua.

Why Young People Don’t Go to the Movies

By Nebula Dong

A recent survey by China Youth University for Political Science found young people rarely go to the cinema – 73.2% of primary, 62% of middle school and 60% of college students and young working people went to cinema less than five times a year. Most go to the cinema only once or twice a year.

It wasn’t because young people don’t like the movies – according to the survey, 64% of primary and middle school students and 50% of college students and young workers claimed they enjoy going to the cinema very much. They liked scientific fiction, history, martial arts and trendy modern movies.

Nor was it a lack of nearby cinemas: 50% of primary and middle school students and



Photo by Photocore

60% of college students and young workers have a cinema half an hour from home or school. Only 2% of those surveyed cited lack of cinemas available.

Research group leader Lu Deping says that:

- 39% cited no time to go
- 34% enjoyed a VCD or DVD more
- 22% found tickets too expensive

Lu thinks “no time” also includes competition from other forms of entertainment. “Tickets too expensive” reveals today’s urban youth still have limited funds, especially students. “Enjoying VCDs at home” reveals the availability of cheap pirate discs in Chinese cities. To counter these factors, he suggests cinema companies lower ticket prices for young people.

Survey information

The survey was conducted by a research group of China Youth University for Political Science, led by Lu Deping, and based on a questionnaire involving 1,816 people aged 13-26 in 20 Chinese cities.

City Names Most Peaceful Neighborhoods

By Dong Nan

Last week, the city Environmental Protection Bureau released “the top 19 peaceful communities in Beijing” for the first time. All of them are in Chaoyang and Haidian districts.

The larger-than-50,000 square meter communities were gauged

by a complete set of factors:

- sound lower than 55 decibels by day, 45 by night;
- number of special employees to keep noise down;
- methods to reduce the noise level of public fixtures such as elevators and water pumps;
- noise levels of nearby ser-

vices such as catering and entertainment;

- interior and exterior decoration going on only in the daytime;
- sports and entertainment activities organized by the community should not disturb residents and should not use loud

speakers;

- number of “Don’t blow your horn” signs for automobiles;
- number of hotlines in the community for residents to complain about noise, and that complaint should be solved to the satisfaction of at least 95% of nearby residents.

Peaceful Communities in Beijing

District	Name	Address	Percentage of greenbelt	Area (10,000 square meters)	Residents (families)
Chaoyang district	Huatengyuan Community	No.54, Dongsanhuan Nanlu	33	50	3,000
	Jixiangli Community	Jixiangli, Chaowai Dajie	40	23	1,700
	Xiandaicheng Community	No.88, Jianguolu	30	22	1,386
	Global Trade Mansion	No.9, Guanghualu	31	17.6	460
	Lihong Garden	No.6 Zuojiazhuang Zhongjie	37	17	3,000
	Xibahe Xili Community	No.22 Xibahe Nanli	40	15	2,618
	Anhua Xili New Community	No.25 Anhua Xili Yiqu	56	12.5	1,570
	Huixinyuan	No.9 Huixin Xijie	30	11	569
	Jiaheyuan Community	No.21 – 26, Panjiayuan Nanli	33.5	10.6	896
	Beichen Huiyuan Global Mansion	No.8 Beichen Donglu	35	10	380
	Longtanhu Community	No.9 Panjiayuan	31.6	9.6	672
	Xingfuyicun Community	Xingfuyicun Xili	44.7	6.7	265
	Tuanjie Mansion	No.12 Tuanjiehu Dongli	27	6.5	500
	Tuanshuiyuan Beili Community	Liulitun, Madaokou	34	5.9	358
	Jinxiuyuan Mansion	Xingfucun Zhonglu	39	5.5	198
	Hongmiao Community	Yingjiafen, Chaoyanglu	40	5.2	820
Haidian district	Hepingxiyuan Community	Xiyuan, Hepingjie	38	5.2	340
	Yangchunguanghua Community	Xuanquanhe Xilu, Xiaonanzhuang	35	22	1,337
	Boruyuan Community	No.11, Lindabeilu	40	10	754

By Liu Zhaoxi

Heavy smoke was seen coming out of the ventilation opening of the mine pit by workers on the surface at around 7am on Sunday. Communication with underground was lost. No one could tell what exactly was going on at that time, but it soon became apparent that a serious gas explosion had occurred at the state-owned Chenjiashan coal mine in central Shaanxi, a province in northwest China.

Black Sunday

Two hundred and ninety-three miners were working the pit at the time of the blast. For the following three hours, no one walked out, Xinhua News Agency reported on Sunday. By 1pm Sunday, 123 workers had been rescued, many of whom had been working close to the exit of the pit. Some survivors showed symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, the news agency said. Four more workers were pulled from the mine by Monday. The remaining 166 were believed dead.

"In an environment of high levels of carbon monoxide and gas, it is impossible that the miners still trapped underground can survive," Huo Shichang, head of the Shaanxi Bureau of Coal Mine Industry, was quoted as saying by Xinhua on Wednesday, when 65 bodies had been found. The accident is the country's deadliest since 162 miners were killed in a fire in 2000 in southern China, the Associated Press said on Wednesday.

The rescuers had tried to reach the blast zone underground, but thick gas stopped them from moving deeper. Flames were still burning at the spot and experts at the site warned that with the high density of gas, a second explosion was possible anytime.

An investigation team set up by the State Council is trying to identify the cause of the accident, Huo Shichang told Xinhua on Tuesday. What is already known

is that on November 23, workers at Chenjiashan mine saw gas burning at the blast spot. They soon extinguished the flames and dug 27 meters further ahead, Huo said.

No matter the cause, the Chenjiashan coal mine was always a hazardous site. It is categorized a high-gas mine, where coal, gas and petroleum co-exist, with a high risk of flood, fire, gas or all of the aforementioned. The coal dust there can also easy explode, Xinhua reported.

The exploded methane gas is a flammable gaseous hydrocarbon produced by the natural decomposition of organic matter and the carbonization of coal. When the gas density in the air reaches 5.5-16%, it will explode as long as there is a flame. A gas explosion creates high temperatures and high air pressure, sending out toxic air, according to references provided by the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety.

Series of exploding coal mines

While rescuers were still fighting their way to the blast zone at Chenjiashan coal mine on Wednesday, another gas explosion was reported on the official website of the State Administration of Coal Mine Safety. At 1:30am Wednesday, a rural coal mine in Liupanshui, southwest Guizhou Province, was also blasted by a gas explosion. Of the 49 miners in the pit at midnight, 13 were killed, 33 got out safely and three were still missing.

And people still have a fresh memory of a mine accident less than a month ago: The blast on October 20 in Daping coal mine in central Henan province, which



A miner's daughter waits for information.

Photo by Photocom

was also a gas explosion in the pit, left 148 dead.

Still yet other coal mine gas explosions happened almost one after another within just a month. On November 11, an explosion in the Xincheng mine in Pingdingshan, Henan, caused the deaths of 33 people. More than a week later, on November 23, a village-run coal mine in Taiyuan, in north China Shanxi province, exploded with at least 12 dead.

The issue of China coal mine safety has captured concern around the world. In 2003, coal production worldwide was about

five billion tons, with a death toll of about 8,000 from accidents. China claimed 35 percent of total production, but nearly 80 percent of the death toll. Also in that year, the death rate per million tons of coal production in China was 100 times that of the United States and 30 times that of South Africa. Wang Xianzheng, head of the State Administration of Work Safety, cited these figures in his November 11 speech to a national meeting discussing the safety issue of coal mines.

China is making progress on coal mine safety, Wang said. He

expected the death toll this year to be fewer than 5,000, "the lowest in history."

"In the past, over 10,000 workers died every year in coal mines in this country. Since 2000, that number began to be squeezed below 7,000," and the death rate of per million ton of coal production will be reduced from 5.77 in 2000 to an expected 3 this year, Wang said in the speech.

Despite this kind of official progress, accidents with a death toll of over 10 still raise eyebrows. What factors can be held responsible for the series of coal

mine explosions?
Possible causes

"The general economic background for these accidents is the recent active demand for coal and exports," Hong Tao, professor at Beijing Technology and Trade University, told *Beijing Today*.

Reports from the China Coal Industry Network show that the coal market has been booming since the beginning of this year, with most areas in need of coal supply and coal prices continuing to climb.

"In pursuit of production and profits, safety is overlooked," Hong said.

Poor facilities and management in coal mines could also increase the risks of accidents, Lin Yanling, professor at China Institute of Industrial Relations, told *Beijing Today*. This seems to be the case in the Daping mine explosion, where poor ventilation allowed gas to build up to dangerous levels when the miners dug too deep. The gas was ignited by sparks from a running engine. According to data tested by the gas supervision system, 30 minutes went by between the gas escalating to explosive levels and the actual explosion itself. Meanwhile, Daping mine did nothing. Such safety management flaws are a major cause of fatal accidents, reported Xinhua on November 13.

Wang Xianzheng also admitted at the meeting that one of the reasons for coal mine accidents in China is the low level of technology and safety control. Poor training and low awareness about risks and rescue techniques are other problems pointed out by Lin. China in recent years has launched a campaign to close down smaller private mines and consolidate the industry: 60,000 out of 80,000 small mines have been shut down, Wang said.

Lin told *Beijing Today*: "Even for large state-owned enterprises, they hire migrant workers to reduce production costs in the wake of reform. I think these workers lack training."

Her comments resonated with Wang's, who said in his speech that migrant and temporary workers have become the front line of miners who still need training, discipline and caution.

Lack of qualified technicians is yet another problem for the China coal mining industry, one which Lin and Wang again happened to have the same view. Only about 500 students enroll in mining or related majors annually at Chinese colleges. According to a 2001 survey cited in Wang's speech, most mines lack safety professionals.

"Safety and sanitation management at coal mines require professionals who have expertise in both technology and safety laws. But many current personnel know either the law or the technology, but not both," Lin said.

Banned: Surgery on Drug Addicts' Brain

Until Health Ministry decides on effectiveness of operation

By Wang Fang

Concerned about harmful side-effects, China's Health Ministry on November 2 banned a controversial brain operation conducted on at least 500 patients in more than 20 hospitals. The operation's aim? To cure drug addiction.

The hospitals, represented by San Jiu Brain Hospital – the first hospital to have received authorization to perform such surgery from Guangdong Health Department in 2001 – responded that "such an operation should not be banned as it is a normal scientific experiment," according to Xu Dezhi, director of San Jiu Brain Hospital, speaking on CCTV 1.

Health Ministry spokesman Qi Guoming replied on CCTV 1: "The operations had to be stopped because they are still going through clinical research and their effectiveness and safety had not been proven."

Why the brain?

"Opening your skull, locating some points and then destroying them" is how the operation is described by some hospitals. What kind of person would seriously consider such serious measures? The answer: A very serious drug addict.

Scientists have located a part of the mechanism for rewards in the brain. That is, if a man feels pleasant after doing something, a reflex then forms in his nervous system. After that man keeps thinking about it, this we call desire. The most basic rewarding actions in our daily life are eating and sleeping.

With drug addiction, the sensation of pleasure caused by drugs is transmitted into the brain by a reward center and forms repeated nervous urges which can only be maintained

by continuous drug taking. Viewed from this perspective, drug addiction is not only a bad habit, but also a chronic brain disease that repeatedly attacks the victim.

Statistics show that generally only 10 percent of people who receive rehabilitation treatment quit drugs successfully, while more often they start to take drugs again. It's the ultimate test of willpower.

But the brain operation, by removing a part of the brain associated with cravings, can allegedly ensure more patients stay away from drugs. Xu Dezhi told CCTV 1: "Brain surgery on drug addicts is to eliminate a shapeless desire. The short-term percentage of our patients who quit drugs is 100 – which means injecting

heroin today but not wanting any more after operation.

"We also have conducted long-term observation of our patients and found only 10

percent who underwent surgery took drugs again."

Operation

The location on the brain needs to be found before any operation begins. This is the technological core of the whole brain operation.

Xu Dezhi told Xinhua in July: "The three-dimensional locating process is completed by MEG, NMR and CT. Our doctors also lure out the addiction origins in patients' brains. By playing videotapes featuring drug taking, they observe patients' MEG and locate the points of strongest signals. These are the places in the nervous center with an abnormal development under the sway of drugs, continuously demanding a new hit."

Side-effects

Mrs. Wu, whose 26-year-old son, a heroin addict, had the op-



A Beijing surgeon opens the skull to conduct the controversial brain surgery on October 22.

Photo by Photocom

eration on June 28, 2004 in San Jiu Brain Hospital, told CCTV 1: "He has quit drugs. However, he walks quite slow and kind of clumsy now."

The CCTV 1 reporter asked her son to move something on a table about two meters away, but in trying, he knocked over a cup and almost fell over.

That's just fine with Mom: "We knew about the possible side-effects before the operation, but if it's a choice between an idiot son and an addict son, we choose the former."

CCTV 1 found six patients out of 50 who underwent the operation at Sun Jiu Brain Hospital have started to take drugs again. Of the remaining 44 who underwent surgery between March and September, 18 were reportedly normal, 10 suffering unusual characteristics such as a short temper or indifference, four had lost some memory, five had both, two were retarded, one had become lazy and silent, one was slow, one had lost his desire, one wanted to drink alcohol and one still yearned for drugs but could still control himself.

Han Jisheng, director of the neurological research institute of Beijing University doubted the result of surgery:

"We would be happy to locate one key point in our brains which only deals with drug addiction. But the memory of drugs may exist in desire points for something else. If you destroy all these desire points, the patient will lose his reward mechanism and he will not be interested in many things."

But these side-effects were not the only reason for the Health Ministry to act.

Naltrexone or operation?

A Xiang, who declined to give her whole name, told CCTV 1 her younger brother, who underwent surgery at Sun Jiu Brain Hospital on May 10, 2004 took the drug again soon after the operation. "He started to inject heroin only half a month after leaving the hospital," she said. "Moreover, he didn't take any medicine, such as naltrexone, prescribed by the doctor."

Wang Hechun, manager of medicine at Beijing Sihuan Pharmaceutical Company, the producer of naltrexone on the prescription of A Xiang's brother, told CCTV 1, "After taking this medicine, drug addicts will not feel happy at all about heroin."

Naltrexone was approved by the Health Ministry in 1995 to prevent drug addicts from

taking heroin again and is by far the only effective medicine, he said.

"The drug addicts who receive rehabilitation treatment must take it at least once a day," he said.

Xu Guozhu, deputy of the China Medicine Dependence Research Institute, shared his doubts with CCTV 1, "If the operation can locate the points for addiction accurately, why does the doctor need to prescribe naltrexone to fight psychological dependency?"

When CCTV 1 asked Xu Dezhi, director of Sun Jiu Brain Hospital, about this, he said, "We normally don't prescribe this medicine because it does harm the liver. We only require heavy drug addicts to take the medicine."

However CCTV 1 found only two patients in 44 did not take naltrexone. The rest all took it for one month to half a year. Some still take it.

Han Jisheng, director of the neurological research institute of Beijing University, talked about the brain's capacity for self-healing, "The human body is a network. When you destroy one point, you may disturb the network for a while. But the network will finally right itself.

"I can say that in several months after destroying those points, some patients will quit drugs, but some may not. An accurate result can only be known after a few years."

Hospital response

Sun Jiu Brain Hospital on Monday issued a statement, charging that "the report is inconsistent with the facts" and announcing that it will publish a research report in a couple of months. The hospital alleged that it has asked the Health Ministry to assign an expert team to check the operation and make an "objective and fair" conclusion about conducting future operations.

By Zhang Huan

A documentary by an amateur filmmaker caused an upset in a competition organized by China Central Television (CCTV) earlier this year when it won first prize, ahead of entries by several professionals.

Kuang Dan's Secret by Zhang Hua tells about an ordinary, three-person-family in Shenzhen, one of the fastest developing cities in China. The daughter, Kuang Dan, has kept the fact that her father is an unregistered bicycle repairman secret from her well-off classmates. The film, shot on digital video (DV), focuses on the family's positive attitude toward life and their shared happiness despite their low social status.

Such representation of the details of life and sympathetic point of view came from Zhang Hua, a woman in her thirties who formerly worked in a hairdressing salon in Shenzhen.

Before shooting the DV, Zhang had been one of the main characters in an 18-episode DV documentary, named *Sisters*, recording the life of five women working in Zhang's salon, which was a big hit when it was broadcast on dozens of TV stations in China.

"DV has changed my attitude toward life," Zhang said in her workroom, a fifth-story apartment close to Andingmen subway station in Beijing, during an interview with *Beijing Today* on November 15. "I didn't care about others because nobody cares about me. I lived with my miseries and did not make friends. But after taking up a DV camera, I changed in many aspects. I became more tolerant and began to think from other people's point of view. And I am happy."

From village to city

Born in a village near Quzhou, Zhejiang Province, Zhang left her hometown at the age of 16 with the aim of "setting up my own career." At first she helped her elder sister Zhang Wei to run a hairdressing salon in Quzhou. They moved their shop to Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province, in 1990. Later her sister went back home to get married and to give birth to her first child. Zhang was left to run the small shop alone.

During that time, Zhang fell in love with one of her customers, a man from Taiyuan, Shanxi Province. After living together for some time, Zhang suggested marriage but the man always evaded the issue, telling Zhang that he came from a high class family who would never allow their son to marry a woman of such low social status as Zhang. The man suggested having a baby first and then his family would have no choice but to accept the truth. Zhang agreed and secretly gave birth to a girl. But till the girl was two years old, the man never raised the possibility of taking the mother and daughter to his home.

Zhang became very worried and threatened to kill herself if he did not take them to his family. The man finally agreed to go together to his home to get married. However, arriving at Taiyuan, the man did not take them directly to his home but settled them in a relative's house and left by himself. Zhang and her daughter lived there for several days without seeing the man again. "I became extremely resentful. I had seen his ID and partly remembered his address. So I went out asking about his

A New Focus

A DV camera gives a woman inspiration and sense of purpose



Zhang Hua in *Sisters*

home from one door to another. In the end I found his home, a shabby house, much worse than that of my family. Then I knew why he did not want me to go to his home. He didn't want me to know the reality of his family."

"Actually I didn't mind that his family was poor, but he felt that he had lost face. He refused to marry me." Speaking of her past, Zhang was very calm, smiling from time to time. Maybe time has eased the pain, but Zhang referred to him only as "the father of my daughter." The father insisted on keeping the daughter with him, and Zhang had to leave, alone.

Li Jinghong and *Sisters*

To be closer to her daughter, Zhang came live in Beijing in 1999, finding a job in a beauty salon. Next to the salon was a cafe whose owner was a young woman of Zhang's age. Sometimes when she finished work, Zhang would go to the cafe to stay a while. That is where she met Li Jinghong, the man who Zhang says changed her life, and who Zhang refers to as "Teacher Li."

Following Li's suggestion, Zhang left Beijing for Shenzhen at the end of 1999, where she took a six-month course in cosmetics and then opened her own beauty shop with a loan from her elder sister that summer.

Li, a freelance journalist and former photographer came up

with the idea of making a DV after seeing some short films. Zhang and her shop became Li's subject. "For half a year, he lived with us and tried to go into our life. He slept on the floor and ate and drank together with us. We didn't know when he turned on his camera and when he switched it off. He was not really shooting for his project, just trying to get along with us and to get us used to the camera," says Zhang.

"He told us he was going to shoot a story about us, but we didn't believe him at all. I said to him, 'you think you can make

a TV series all by yourself? Who would care about our life?' He just answered that he would prove he was right one day. He treated us as his family members. He cared about us and helped us from the bottom of his heart. We all felt it," Zhang says.

Li took three years to complete the shooting. Once he went with one of the employees of the salon back to her hometown and saw her approached by creditors who had come to demand payment of a debt. He borrowed money from his friends and even asked his wife in Beijing to send some

money to pay the debts for the woman.

Li won the trust of the girls but his camera had a bad effect on business. Some people would not come into the salon when they saw the camera. "At the beginning business was OK, but later it dropped off, partly because of the filming. We were very depressed. Everyone had quarreled with him because he kept shooting us, which made us more upset. Sometimes I became really furious, and I wanted to smash his camera," Zhang says, laughing as she recalls the bitterness, which has faded with time.

Take up a DV camera

At the end of 2001, business had become so bad Zhang had to sell her shop. All the employees went their own way, with Li still following them and shooting. Zhang had nothing to do. Occasionally, she helped Li to do some shooting.

"I first picked up a DV camera in 2002 when my elder sister's daughter Bei'er was going to Guangzhou to take part in a dancing competition. Li wanted to shoot the competition, but if he followed, he had to pay for another hotel room. Both of us had little money so we finally decided that I would go in place of Li, since I could sleep in the same room with my sister and Bei'er."

Before leaving, Li carefully set the control panel of his DV camera so that Zhang could easily manage it. "He taught me how to turn the camera on and off and told me not to touch any other buttons," says Zhang. So she went, and the shooting didn't go too badly. Many shots were kept in the final cut.

From that time on, Zhang worked as Li's assistant. If a scene was not convenient for Li to shoot, Zhang would go instead. "We are all women, and actually like sisters. The girls behaved more naturally and easily in front of my camera. I knew nothing about technique, my technique was simply to shoot as much as possible. And then, when doing the editing, he would tell me which shot was good and which was bad, and where I should have stood to shoot."

For some time, Zhang made a living filming

weddings for three or four hundred yuan a time. "I felt a pain in my heart when shooting weddings. I could not help thinking of my miserable love. Why could they be so happy while I could not? Li later told me the reason I did not feel happy was that shooting wedding ceremonies was not what I really wanted to do."

"I decided then to make my own film. I wanted to shoot an ordinary family, a happy family, to see how they lived their life."

Zhang remembered one of her schoolmates in the cosmetic school often talked about how good her husband was and how happy they were, and resolved to make that family her subjects.

Kuang Dan's Secret

When Zhang went to her friend's home, she was shocked to find six families sharing a cramped three-bedroom apartment. There were three people in her friend's family. The father was an unregistered bicycle repairman who went out to work at 5 in the morning and did not come home till 8 in the evening. The mother did not work. She took care of her husband and daughter, a junior high school student in a "key" high school of Shenzhen.

Zhang copied Li's approach. She moved into the apartment and slept together with Kuang Dan, the daughter, on her small bed set in the tiny balcony.

"I have never seen the couple quarreling. Though they lived a difficult life, they had a positive attitude. I have never experienced such warmth. I truly felt I was a member of their family. The father worked so hard, but you could always hear him humming the song *A Beautiful Life*."

While her parents struggled to make enough to survive and keep the family intact, Kuang Dan had to face another kind of pressure, that of attaining good academic results. She also had to cope with the pressure from her classmates, who all come from well-off families. "Kuang Dan was 12 years old. And she had an inferiority complex, though her schoolwork was excellent. She had never told her classmates that her father was a mere bicycle repairman. She kept that secret."

"I often chatted with Kuang Dan and I also went with her to her school to shoot. I told her about my life and my daughter. I said to her, 'you are actually much luckier than my daughter. At least you live with your parents. My daughter cannot live with her mother.' Kuang Dan trusted me, and we became good friends."

At the end of the DV, during a class activity Kuang Dan gives a speech in which she reveals her secret in front of the whole class, saying that she is very proud of having such a father. Kuang Dan cried, her classmates cried, and so does everybody who sees the DV.

Kuang Dan's Secret has brought Zhang success and confidence, though not much in the way of financial return. Laughing, she says, "When some old friends who know what I used to be like see me, they'd say 'you must have made a lot of money. You look so good.' But actually I am poorer than when I was working in the beauty salon. I haven't bought any new clothes for ages. I spent every penny I had buying DV tapes. But I know I feel happy now. It has nothing to do with money."

Photo by Tian Xiaotong



By Jacqueline Yu

“There’s an avant-garde drama being performed not far from here, and I’m the star. When the auditorium is filled with nice rich men and women, all dressed up and perfumed, seated there and in their most proper manners, I get up on stage, where there’s simply a toilet and a roll of toilet paper. I get up there and take a shit with them all silent and watching. They are even afraid to cough, lest it interfere with the natural sounds of the drama. The performances usually don’t last long, and I’m always far too ashamed to bow to the roaring applause that comes when it’s over. The drama is performed once or twice a day, and I’m getting very sick of it.”

Taken from Jason Stuart Ratcliff’s *The Books of Angelhaunt: Art Prose, Volume 1*, the quote might sum up the feelings avant-garde dramatists around the world. In China, the flowers of avant-garde drama have been blooming for some two decades now. And the poses of those young and not-so-young drama experimentalists have morphed from merely playing with something impulsive and unorthodox to a more mature and positive direction.

On July 16, 1992 the curtain came down on China’s longest running play, Lao She’s *Cha Guan* (*Tea House*), which opened in 1958 and left an unsurpassed milestone in Chinese modern drama history. The cast, most of whom were then in their 60s, bade a tearful farewell to the audience, who responded with an emotional applause, a truly touching moment.

On the other side of scales sits an equally moving scene, played by a much smaller group of young people, mostly in their 20s. 1992 was the year the theatrical careers of a group of young people, many of whom are famous today, took off at the mini-theatre of the Central Academy of Drama. At that time, what is now the mini-theatre of the Capital Theatre was a staff dining room, while the experimental theatre on the third floor of the Capital Theatre was a small banquet hall. Collaborators were classmates from the Central Academy of Drama and their friends. They created freely, readapting classic plays as they pleased. The audience were mainly friends of the actors, directors

Lin Zhaohua’s *A Parody*, staged in a disused factory.

Zhang Guangtian and Meng Jinghui



Lin Zhaohua (right) with actor Li Naiwen

and scriptwriters.

“I thought Chinese modern drama has been misled by the Cao Yu model,” Wang Yipei, foreign literature professor, poet, and friend of renowned avant-garde dramatist Zhang Guangtian, once told his class. He says so not in criticism of the playwright – but in reference to the “uniform,” a combination of western basic mode, Stanislavski’s

System and a few examples like *Cha Guan* (*Tea House*) and *Lei Yu* (*Thunderstorm*), fostered by a few great Chinese dramatists after 1919 and later held up as “correct” by the government.

“It is unnatural to follow a system proposed by Stanislavski for 50 years,” director Lin Zhaohua said in December 2002, when his historical work, *Jue Dui Xin Hao* (*Extreme Signal*), celebrated its

20th anniversary. This play is seen as a watershed in the history of modern Chinese drama – though seen today, there appears to be very little “avant-garde” about it. It was, however, the first time for a play to be performed in a mini theatre, and exorcised the ideal of good character and patterning acting method that had constrained theatrical productions since the Cul-

tural Revolution.

In the early 1990s, Lin established his own drama studio, dedicated to producing experimental plays, from re-interpretations of western classics such as *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and *Faust*, his own adaptation of Chekhov and Beckett titled *Three Sisters Waiting for Godot*, to brand new works by Chinese playwrights such as *A Parody*, which was performed in an old factory where the actors performed on a heap of coal, *Boundless Love* and *Chessmen*.

The critics were kept busy discussing those new forms and guessing at the meanings behind them. Yet, for Lin, this was, and remains, the only way to express his resentment of the so-called mainstream. “Is there a country that has only one type of drama and one theoretical school? Ridiculous! What I do is to break this ridiculous situation,” he said in an interview in the November issue of *Time Out*.

The fact is, critics never stop querying anything that looks new or strange. Any new drama that claims to liberate humanity risks being attacked as narcissistic and the people involved would be scolded for playing with formality. Such forms, goes the argument, overshadow the script, confuse the audience and cripples the spirit of the original story. This is no new phenomenon, in two decades, critical thought has never escaped this circle.

A more pressing problem is that the center of controversy has shifted from something relatively abstract to something both more complex and more rooted in the real world, namely, the market. And regardless of how much those that produce such drama might protest that they are above such mundane considerations, the reality is that the problem is always the audience. And this is the root of the love-hate relationship between drama producers and the critics.

In terms of winning the hearts and minds of the audience, one director has already had considerable success. Since 1998, anyone who claims never to have heard the name Meng Jinghui could not claim to be a theatre aficionado. This 38-year-old director is the one who has awakened many young people’s love for drama and shaped their judgment of productions by other directors.

A standard Meng-brand play inevitably includes singing and satire, involves a recent social or cultural phenomena, and honest, stubborn, no-holds-barred pure love till the end of the world, which is the hook that ensures the loyalty of his young following. The best example is *Rhinoceros in Love*, which premiered in 1999, the first avant-garde mini-theatre play that actually turned a profit.

Meng says he follows the ideal of “Serving the people with ones heart and soul,” a famous slogan of the Chinese Communist Party.

In accordance with this philosophy, he always takes part in a discussion with the audience after the premiere of a new play, to hear people’s views on it.

Meng confesses that sometimes he just wants to do something mischievous, just for the pleasure of breaking the rules, and maintains that attacks by the mainstream press just make him stronger. “My creations are a process of stealing, robbing, murder and arson,” he says, meaning he borrows interesting elements from foreign perfor-



Mu Gui Ying, an experimental Peking Opera production directed by Li Liuyi.

Guo Tao and Wu Yue in Meng Jinghui’s *Rhinoceros in Love*.

Photos by Li Yan

Cartoons Come to Life



In the world of cosplay, dressing up takes on a whole new meaning

Photo by Alex

By Sabu Zhang

The just concluded Sixth World Cartoon Conference in Beijing presented a welcome opportunity for comic fans to get together and talk about their obsession, view new works, and get into character, literally. The conference, which ran from October 3 to 6, combined a comic industry exposition, an exhibition of original artwork by master cartoonists, a creation competition and a world cosplay party. Of these activities, it was the cosplay party that attracted the most attention, and the biggest number of participants.

Cosplay is short for costume play, and cosplayers are people who are fascinated with cartoon characters, usually Japanese and Korean style manga, that they dress up as their favorite hero or heroine.

As Japanese comics continue you reach new heights of popularity among young people around the world, Asian cosplaying has been picked in western countries. But the hottest scene is still in Asia, Japan, and in Taiwan, Hong Kong and China’s mainland.

The first cosplay competition in China’s mainland was held in 2000, and it quickly caught on with help of frequent comic expositions and fan exhibitions in big cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing.

For cosplayers, a pretty face is not the key to a successful show, it’s all about the costume. In Japan, there are specialty stores devoted to the needs of serious cosplayers. There are officially released costumes for fans to buy, as well as handmade costumes sold by individuals. There are even second-hand stores of-

fering a more economic option for those fans for whom money is an object. In China’s mainland and in Hong Kong, it tends to be more do-it-yourself.

For someone who never reads comics, the level of obsession shown by hard-core cosplayers might be a little difficult to understand. It is not simply a matter of dressing up as the chosen character, one has to imitate the way they walk and talk, emulate their habits and idiosyncrasies, in short, actually become that character.

These days, any character that appears in a comic or video game is a valid subject for cosplaying, be it human, animal, a robot or even a spaceship.

As in Japan, cosplay in China has flourished in a variety of ways. The ACG (anime, comic and game) Expo

every spring and autumn has become a major gathering for cosplay fans. It took off in Guangzhou, where the trend is to dress up as a character of the opposite sex. Many girls dress up as glamorous manga boys. In Beijing, the focus is more on creating magnificent Chinese-style outfits and theatrical costumes. Chengdu cosplay highlights evening wear, feminine Baroque costuming and western classic attire.

There are no limits as cosplay is not an official activity. If you have your own costumes, you can join a fan club and get ready to put yourself on show. It’s just a matter of picking a character, gathering as much information about him, her or it as you can find, and going for it. If you do it well, you can look forward to seeing yourself on the Internet in full costume, and amaze your audience.

mances, eliminates the unsuccessful, and the spark he lights would little by little grow into an inferno.

Every year, Lin Zhaohua would go to Europe to see what kind of new drama is going on there. “There’s a long distance between Chinese and Western drama, and ours hasn’t reached the level where our audience can choose what they want to see freely. But don’t underestimate young people’s capability to understand new types of European drama – they would accept them and come to love them.”

Meng Jinghui says that people still couldn’t benefit enough from making experimental dramas. “Who can say what kind of intelligence may take part in this big game, if our pockets were really bulging? And who can tell what our theatre scenery would look like if all of those people, with their funny ideas were involved?”

What's New

By Tom Spearman

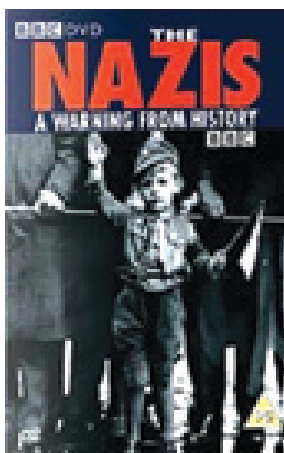
CD
U2, How to Dismantle
an Atomic Bomb

You're either a fan or you aren't. The non-fan has plenty of ammunition, it's true. But the genuine U2 admirer rather likes it that the Dublin rockers' attempts at slick coolness always fail so hilariously. This latest album hits that particular spot within the first 10 seconds, Bono yelling "Uno, dos, trez, quatorze!" Critics have praised the confident sound of this album, but it's hard not to feel it lacks the drama of the band's anthemic, stadium rocking heyday. There are a few forgettable songs and dodgy lyrics, and no other band would expect to get away with a song titled *Yahweh*. But there are some superb moments here. *Vertigo* is a rocking opening track, *Crumbs from Your Table* is a riffastic reminder of U2's crowd-pleasing roots, and *Love and Peace, Or Else* is one of their finest moments in years.

DVD

Seinfeld: Seasons 1, 2 and 3
Box Set

Conceived partly as an antidote to soap-opera style sitcoms like *Friends*, this show is famously about nothing, just comic sketches based around everyday stuff in the daily life of stand-up comedian Jerry Seinfeld, writing/producing partner George, zany neighbor Kramer and gal-pal Elaine. Pulling the first disc from the box, the pilot show feels incredibly dated, with canned laughter cranked up to hysterical levels for Jerry's stand-up interludes. But the writing was tight from the start and the jokes still work. This box set, containing the first three seasons with classic episodes like *The Chinese Restaurant*, is a great way to recall what made the show so addictive.

The Nazis: A Warning
from History

Though the DVD shelves may be stacked with documentaries about the Nazis, testament to our undying thirst for stories about the infamy of the Third Reich, this short BBC series deserves a special mention. It's similar to the landmark BBC "World at War" series in that it focuses on the human aspect in explaining Hitler's rise to power. The interviews with former Nazis and people who witnessed the horror as children are extraordinarily persuasive and moving: a former Nazi recalls with disarming honesty the moment at a meeting where Hitler's famously penetrating gaze convinced him that the Fuhrer was a man of honorable intentions; a woman recalls seeing families wading hand in hand into a river to drown rather than face the vengeance of the approaching Soviet army. This is television at its enthralling best.

Alice through the Upstairs Window



Photo by Tian Yufeng

By Gareth George

Have you ever thought about doing something, then later struggled to remember whether you did it or just considered doing it? Maybe it's just me, but also occupying this gray area between reality, desire and intent is *Roadmetal Sweetbread*. Continuing the British Council's month-long residence in Beijing's North Theatre, *Roadmetal Sweetbread* takes a man, a woman and a film, and creates two alternate versions of reality.

As much an exercise in illusion as theatre, a screen takes center stage, while the two actors move around it. At times the action on the screen mirrors reality, at times opposes it, at times introduces phantasmal figures of fantasy while the physical protagonists clutch thin air.

Roadmetal Sweetbread has toured from 'Shanghai to Beirut', according to the press release, and each performance is unique. As the lights went down, we saw a man on the screen amiably staring into space as he finished a beer, before cycling down a familiar looking hutong, all the way to the entrance of the North Theatre. As the film focused on the theatre doors, a bang was audible and the actor ambled on stage in the flesh. The image on the screen was identical and it wasn't clear whether the actor was being filmed as we watched. Then, continuity broke down.

A woman ran across the stage. The man stared dumbfounded. Then the same woman charged across the screen. Again, our man on stage stared stupidly, this time at thin air. Such disorientating tricks again and again confounded the audience's grasp on what was real and what was imagined.

Head-scratchingly inventive, the cast and their on-screen doubles performed a series of these subterfuges. If you've never watched a woman and her on-screen doppelganger play tug-of-war with a wooden board, you're missing out.

As the performance progressed, a pattern of pursuit between the male and female leads immersed. Mix-ups and differing reactions between the real life and film counterparts gave the show an *Alice in Wonderland* feel – the audience was never sure how the leads would react to each other when they collided. Relentlessly entering and exiting the stage, the audience was never sure where the actors would pop up next, or which side of them would be on show. Bound by some shared desire for each other's presence, their expressions of it varied from domestic shows of propriety to violence to lust to exerting their personalities – their underlying desires deftly realized in almost lifelike technicolor on the objective screen behind them.

With extravagant facial expressions and exaggerated movement – dialogue was kept to a minimum – *Roadmetal Sweetbread* felt like watching a kind of postmodern silent movie. The cartoonish, unexpected explosions of violence enhanced this, like a generator adding kilowatts of life and humanity to what was already a very neat trick.

If you can watch this performance without spending every five minutes thinking "How did they do that?" then you're doing better than me, although perhaps *Roadmetal Sweetbread* is a casualty of its own cleverness. They packed so many tricks into the first half, that it felt a little top heavy, and about 15 minutes too long – perhaps, after all, there is only so much you can do with a man, a woman and a screen.

Return of the King

Presley to Beijing: 'thank you very much'

By Hao Pan

The "Cat King" shook his tail at Poly Theatre last weekend when a man with loud sunglasses strapped on a guitar and wowed Chinese rock 'n' roll fans.

Le Capitole De Quebec's *The Elvis Story*, performed by Canadian Martin Fontaine, explores the story of the famous singer and one-time federal agent in the war on drugs.

Fontaine, who can play many a musical instrument, studied at art school to acquire the necessary acting skills to bring Presley back to life.

Unlike other tributes which rely on canned music, *The Elvis Story* used live performance with video clips rolling on dual screens alongside the stage, representing the events of Elvis' life since his first song recorded at 18.

Starting with *That's alright Mama*, Fontaine stepped on stage and not only looked like the King, but also sounded like



Chinese call Presley "Mao Wang". Photo by Wang Xiaoxi

him. The monologues were full of humor and confident acting. There was definitely a lot of audience contact and communication, including some kisses from the female members.

A five-piece band sounded tight and swung, teaching the audience about rock 'n' roll. Fontaine shook hearts with *Love Me Tender* and encouraged the audience to sing along. Nothing could spoil that moment.

Fontaine and the band plus backing vocalists kept changing costumes through the entire show moving from the 1950s to the 1970s. The show is a blend of music, American history and culture. Elvis came back from the Army in the 1960s to sing *It's Now or Never* and *Girls! Girls! Girls!*

Fontaine successfully recreated Presley, not just the musician, or the superstar, but the man. There was confusion, sadness and depression as Elvis exited stage left, never to return.

Hey Hey, My My

By Ian Provan

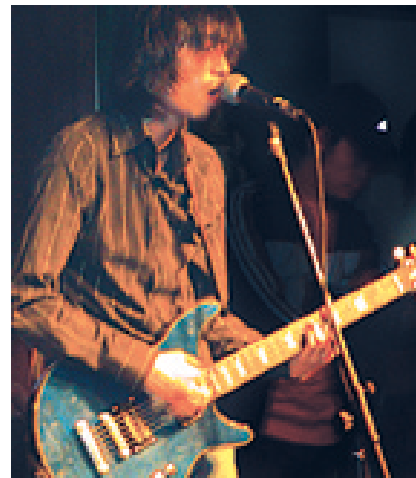
Neil Young nailed it. What could possibly be more exhilarating than a great rock 'n' roll gig? If your answer to that question involves a reference to Ricky Martin, Brandy or JK Rowling, read no further.

If, on the other hand, you recognize the simple fact that music makes the unbearable bearable, then you'll be glad to know that Lengxue Dongwu are back and played at New Get Lucky last Friday. One of the most exciting live bands of the late 20th early 21st century, Lengxue Dongwu, or Cold Blooded Animal, released a refreshingly dark self-titled album in 2000 and shortly after, more or less disappeared off the radar.

Apart from the odd special appearance, such as at last year's Beijing Midi Festival and a visit to Japan this autumn to play in an international music festival, they've been pretty hard to find these past few years. But now, with a new line up and a new album about to hit the stores, things are about to change.

The format of the band remains the same, with singer, lead guitarist and songwriter Xie Tianxiao still very much the focus. Bass player Guo Jian has taken over from Li Ming, and Zhao Wei has replaced Wu Rui on drums. The new album, as yet un-named, is being produced by Jingwen's Scream Records as part of a two-record deal signed with Jingwen in 2000 and is due out in January next year.

As to Friday's gig, the new line-up has clearly spent a lot of time rehears-



Singer, lead guitarist and songwriter Xie Tianxiao Photo by Ian Provan

ing. They were tight, loud and raw. There was also a sense that they are still getting used to each other, and for the first four or five songs, it seemed that the ferocious energy of their earlier incarnation had been tempered somewhat, but those are very small 'but's, and by the end of the set, they had well and truly found their feet. The most exciting thing about the gig was the promise of greater things to come.

The new songs provide ample evidence that Xie is an extraordinarily talented songwriter who is just getting better, and the way they chewed up old songs like *Yongyuan Shige Mimi* (*Forever a Secret*) and *Zuotian Wanshang Wo Keneng Sile* (*I Think I Might Have Died Last Night*) prove that ... well, that Neil Young was right. With bands like Lengxue Dongwu around, rock 'n' roll can never die.

Consultants Fleece Raw Recruits

By Xie Lixue

Job fairs are packed with desperate students searching for an edge in an employers' job market.

One edge senior students like to try for is make themselves known to companies before graduation. They blindly hand in resumes to recruiters at every booth in the job fair, hoping to spread their nets wide and far. But there are some companies lurking at the job fair looking for a certain kind of unquestioning, desperate jobseeker.

Green card

At one recruitment fair for the financial industry, some companies offer opportunities to work as a financial consultant or advisor: flexible and free working time and big potential rewards.

The recruiters tell the students that professional knowledge of finance is not a must because the training courses offered by the companies – such as knowledge of stocks, transactions and futures – will prepare them.

One recruiting employer explained that to some extent, people are “employed” by themselves. For example, a securities broker can earn money by finding clients. If the client can invest more than 200,000 yuan, about 20-25 percent goes to the broker. Also they can invest in exciting opportunities themselves.

For the out-of-town jobseeker, another



A financial company invites “quality professionals” at a job fair earlier this month in Shanghai. Promises of a high salary and corporate shares are a powerful bait. The labor market is deteriorating as more students graduate without jobs each year. The growing gap between supply and demand is creating bubbles, a chance to cheat hungry jobseekers.

Photo by Photocom

er real plus is the possibility of registered permanent residence in Beijing with this new career.

No fee

The companies don't ask graduates to pay a fee. Instead, they offer training and say they will teach them how to

make money.

Opening an investment requires a deposit of 500,000 yuan, but the offer of work, a salary and Beijing residency makes many graduates think it a good deal. Indeed, thousands of resumes sent to companies attest to the fact.

Campus Recruitment Tour:

Tom Tempts Talent

By Xie Lixue

Hundreds of students competed for 30 Beijing office jobs offered by tom.com, one of several national portal websites in its latest campus recruitment tour at Renmin University on November 12.

Backed by Hong Kong tycoon Lee Ka-shing and run by his son Richard Lee, Tom Online Inc. started business in February 2000. The portal specializes in new lifestyles for young people, providing news, fashion, entertainment, chatrooms and private communication tools including SMS.

“Tom.com is now the third-largest portal website in China,” said Pu Dongwan, vice president of Tom Online Inc. “We started with only 93 staff, had 977 after four years and we are expecting more.”

The average age in Pu's company is 26. Sixty-three percent hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Pu answered questions from the audience:

Q: I am studying English and interested in the position of editor of the education channel you provide. What's your suggestion?

A: Actually, the key to being a professional editor is that you must possess a sensitive taste for the news, which means you should select valuable information that readers are inclined to know.

Q: Do you have any internship program for students on their vacations?

A: We don't have an internship program at present. However, we have many people doing part-time work in their free hours. They are always the first group we'd like to consider when job vacancies emerge. So you can apply for that.

Q: You mentioned 5 percent of your staff flow in and out each year. Don't you think that rate is a bit high?

A: It's normal for a company that some people move in and out. For instance, some may jump to a higher position in other companies, or someone at the bottom will be eliminated because we have performance management reviews every year.

Q: Do you have any positions for graduates in science and technology?

A: Yes, we need them in our technical departments, such as the technology application, development and maintenance.

For further information, Chinese can log onto <http://www.tom.com> and <http://www.zhaopin.com>



The domestic stock market has been depressed for two years. The bear market needs new blood to revive it and more sponsors to safeguard a healthier market. That explains why the stock authority is encouraging financial institutions to increase the number of qualified sponsors.

Photo by Photocom

Examinees Line Up to Become Stock Millionaires

By Xie Lixue

There was a fresh round of examinations for company-stock exchange sponsors on November 28, after the last round in March produced only 614 out of 1,549 passes. After the mass failures, the Securities Association of China announced that all employees of securities companies related to banking investment could take exams this time. In addition, those who achieved a mark of at least 60 would be awarded the qualification.

The exams require both solid knowledge and broad experience. Many candidates desire to enter this field as a sponsor because of its high salary and bright future.

Who are sponsors

Sponsors are more like middle-men between companies and the stock exchanges. They take charge of recommending, managing and overseeing the companies during the process of entering the market.

Generally, two sponsors are responsible for one client. One conducts the market operation, and the other plays the role of “designer”. The former searches for the clients or communicates with man-

agers for signing an agreement on market entry. The latter makes plans, such as the changes in the company system, money collection and the business amalgamation. Then, he/she submits all the materials to the China Securities Regulatory Commission for approval.

Sponsors must keep all the information confidential until they finish the project. Thus they cannot speak to the public, which adds a certain mystique and glamour to this career.

However, ordinary people know that sponsors not only have the ability to collect large capital for companies, but also earn a competitive salary.

Pay

Usually, securities companies will pay at least 100,000 yuan annually, and even more than 1 million in some cases. With only 614 sponsors in China now, small companies are inclined to hire these professionals with a high salary and good welfare.

Another part of a sponsor's income is based on performance. They can deduct a percentage, usually lower than 10 percent, from the business.

For example, in Minzu Securities Company, the total revenue is about 20,000

yuan per month. Tebon Securities will pay 300,000 for each sponsor every year, and China Southern Securities Company pays 500,000. Thus it's easy to become a millionaire in this line of work.

With the operation of a sponsorship system this year and regular exams to qualify professionals, the market will bloom for talented sponsors.

How to qualify

The exams not only standardize the job market, but also increase opportunities for students to join in this field. The industry experts of the securities association told *Beijing Youth Daily* that the sponsors nowadays were holding master degrees or above, boasting knowledge in law, finance and accounting. They also have three years' work experience.

Two items are tested: general knowledge of securities and professional knowledge of banking investment, three hours each exam. The questions involve policies, tests and test cases on finance, securities and banking.

After qualifying, they become sponsors who lead a team of lawyers and accountants to bring thousands of yuan in capital to companies.

Seeking Employment

Webmasters wanted. Familiarity with the Internet, web page design and music composition software essential. Love of music useful. Contact Mr. Hu at 6333-1671 ext. 8006.

A graduate of information management from Huazhong S&T University in Wuhan, sophisticated in C/C++, VC6.0, VFP, Access, SQL Server, Activex and software developing, familiar with Flash, Photoshop, Excel, PP uses. Also familiar with medical English and Latin. Contact: 13622751429
E-mail: waairu@sohu.com

Beijing Fei Wanda is looking for three print designers, two commercial advertising collectors and two secretaries. Contact: 8737-8652 ext. 82
E-mail: kf@fwd863.com

Looking for two engineers in wastewater disposal and treatment. English and Autocad are musts. We'll provide training opportunities once recruited, both at home and abroad.
E-mail: hr@ouyawater.com
Website: www.ouyawater.com

A 41-year-old unemployed man is looking for a job asap. I can drive, speak English and am honest and responsible. Contact me at: 1364 1299276 or e-mail wanglijiali@126.com.

A retired president and CEO of two Canadian companies interested in teaching English or French in China.
Cellphone: 1352 0549132
Email: Jeanguyfurois@aol.com

My nickname is Ben. I think I'm a good candidate to be the interpreter for writing and speaking between Chinese and English.
If you need to offer a part-time job for translation, I'll do my best! I appreciate a response from you to my e-mail: natureboy_world@hotmail.com.

Situations Vacant

A cultural media company wants to hire a foreigner for international business.

Requirements: male, British, long time in Beijing, love Chinese culture, stable, honest. Legal experience an advantage.

Contact: sun198052@yahoo.com.cn

A private medical clinic in Dongcheng is looking for a medical clinic secretary.

Requirements: fluent English and Mandarin with superior phone skills. Medical knowledge and terminology desirable. One-year commitment required.

Duties: Reception, phone, marketing/advertising, book-keeping, appointment scheduling for doctors.

Pay: 4,000 RMB/mo if able to perform all listed duties.

Send resume to: confidantmedical@yahoo.com

Job Services

Help you to change your visa (f, x, z, j) and apply for a green card.

Tel: 8659 2919
E-mail: alen678@163.com

(You are welcome to send positions offered and wanted info to: ayi@ynet.com. Beijing Today does not take any responsibility for the accuracy and authenticity of the information published in this column.)

A Beijing-based English newspaper is looking for reporters, freelancers and editors.

Chinese applicants should have university degrees in English or related majors and media experience.

Foreigners from the UK and US with relevant media experience preferred.

Please send your resumes and writing samples to: hr@ynet.com

Southern Cross — Small, But Capable

Located in the northeast end of New South Wales, only one hour from the Gold Coast in Queensland, Australia's Southern Cross University is bathed in sunshine and surrounded by natural beauty.

This public university is not very large, but does have some advantages over Australia's eight major universities.

On Tuesday, Angela Delves, vice-president and pro-vice chancellor (enterprise and international) of Southern Cross University participated in *Beijing Today's* online chat-room — Study Abroad Salon — and introduced her school.

Basic info:

How many campuses do you have? What are their specialties and academic strengths?

— monkeyking

We have three campuses plus a center in Sydney, which is a hotel school.

The main campus is in Lismore in Northern New South Wales (NSW), offering business, arts and health and environmental science.

The second campus is at Coffs Harbour on the coast of northern NSW, offering business, tourism, education, nursing and social sciences.

And the third campus is at the Tweed Gold Coast, offering predominantly business subjects.

The main campus offers all of the courses we have.

What is SCU's ranking in Australia?

— gorilla

There is no official ranking system in Australia, but based on unofficial rankings such as the Good Universities Guide, we are amongst the top ranking for graduate satisfaction.

University advantages:

How does your school compete with the "Group of Eight" to attract Chinese students?

— strawberry125

Courses offered at Southern Cross are more targeted to career outcomes, which would be of advantage to prospective students.

For example, we offer a number of business and IT courses that focus on international business at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. We have the largest DBA program in Australia with students in many places in the world. Our MBA students have been very successful in their career paths, particularly in Shanghai.

In addition, we are a small university, so each student is more than a number. If students come to us in Australia, they will have very good access to our academic resources and a great deal of personal attention.

We are very experienced in distance education and this assists in our offshore courses, which we offer with partners in a number of places in China.

We are a real international school. A student here is in a class of students of many nationalities and gets a very well-rounded education.

We are acknowledged as the best university in Australia for tourism and related areas as well as courses such as natural and complementary medicine and environmental science.

What subjects at your university have the best reputations?

— blueskysky

SCU has an international



Angela Delves

reputation for courses in many aspects of tourism, hospitality and hotel management, environmental science, natural and complementary medicine and health areas.

It also offers good courses on international business at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels as well as information technology.

We have outstanding research centers in plant molecular biology and phytochemistry and environmental science and natural and complementary medicine.

Chinese students and student life:

How many Chinese students are studying in your university?

— combaq

SCU has 80 on-shore Chinese students and 800 offshore (i.e. students in China).

Are there any Chinese student communities or organizations on campus?

— greengrass

We have a Chinese student's association supported by the Chinese government.

We have a comprehensive range of social activities available for all students to participate in. Students from more than 50 countries and Australian students are welcome to participate for a nominal fee and visit places such as the Australia Zoo, Dream World, Byron Bay and the Gold Coast.

What kinds of accommo-



dations do you provide? What are the costs? Do you arrange for students to live with local families?

— Thorn Bird

We provide accommodation on campus with self-catering for less than \$130 per week for 20 weeks.

We can also arrange home-

stay for students if they wish for \$185 per week, which includes accommodation and meals.

What daily life services do you provide to international students?

— colapepsi

We have an International Office on campus supporting international students. We assist students in finding accommodation, usually on campus, and assist with shopping, banking, entertainment, clubs, excursions and social events.

We have special learning assistance facilities for international students.

We have counselors, doctors and dentists on our main campus and pride ourselves on looking after all of our international students very well.

We are very well aware that students need assistance to settle in to a new environment and assist with learning and English if necessary. We monitor their progress and offer pre-departure and pre-completion counseling and assistance.

Is your campus safe? What measures do you have to secure students' safety?

— Thorn Bird

All our campuses are in Northern NSW, which is a very safe area. There are rarely any problems for interna-

tional students.

As most of our international students are accommodated in university residences (which have their own senior college residents), students have a safe environment and a great deal of support within the university.

In addition, the university campus has 24-hour security available to all students.

Relationship with China:

Many foreign universities have set up academic cooperation with Chinese counterparts and opened training courses for Chinese government officials. Has your university done anything along these lines?

— combaq

We have relationships with Jilin University, Dalian University, Changchun Normal College and Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics and many others in development.

We do have a number of arrangements in China. For example with the Hong Kong Institute of Technology (HKIT), with Shanghai TV University, Tianjin University of Science and Technology, Dalian University, Guangdong University of Law and Business plus a number of arrangements with other universities under negotiation at present.

As yet, we only have an exchange program with a university in Hong Kong, but would be willing to consider exchange programs with other Chinese universities.

Students can always come for one or two semesters as a study abroad student and take units that will count towards their home degrees.

What are the policies regarding international students holding part-time jobs during their studies in Australia and getting internships and jobs or immigrating after graduation?

— scarf

Students are allowed to work 20 hours per week during study periods and full time during breaks.

There are many employment opportunities in tourism and hospitality at Coffs Harbour and Tweed Gold Coast. At the Lismore Campus the opportunities are not so prevalent, but many students do seasonal work in the local horticultural industry or gain temporary jobs by moving to the larger metropolitan cities during the long summer break.

Internships are only permitted if they are part of a student's academic program. Otherwise, students are required to return home at the completion of their program.

It is possible for Chinese students to apply for permanent residency on the completion of their studies but this is a strictly controlled process.

(Edited By Zhang Nan)

Ask Ayi:

Q: My friends recommend I study in Ukraine because of its strong aviation safety academic programs and cheap costs. Can you give me information on the higher education system and life there?

A: Ukraine is strong in the academic fields of space science, aviation industry, shipbuilding, new materials, chemical industry and arts like paintings and music. World-class academies include the State University of Kiev, Kiev International University of Civil Aviation, Ukrainian State University of Arts and Tchaikovsky Music Institute.

The average annual cost for studies, including tuition fees, accommodation and living expenditures, is less than \$3,000 for undergraduates and \$5,000 for postgraduates. Therefore, it's quite cost-effective.

You need Ukrainian and Russian language proficiency before starting to study. But don't worry. There are many one-year language proficiency schools and programs attached to the universities. Prices are cheap, normally less than \$1,000.

Visas are easy to obtain as well. Once you receive an offer, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs will automatically give you the visa. The only remaining step is to pick up the visa from the Ukrainian Embassy in Beijing.

Q: I am a junior student of finance in Beijing Normal University, but I am more interested in psychology. Can I apply for an advanced degree in psychology in Australia?

A: Theoretically, you can apply to any university in Australia that offers a postgraduate psychology program.

But before that, you have to finish your study in finance and obtain at least a bachelor's degree, because all postgraduate programs in Australia require applicants to have completed their undergraduate educations.

A problem could be whether or not you have a sound academic base in psychology, meaning you have received serious education on the subject, or you only have an 'interest'.

Q: Do university students in France receive subsidies to cover regular life expenses?

A: The major subsidy for students in France is for accommodation, including reducing rent payments.

Students should apply to La Caisse d'Allocation Familiale, the unit that administers the area in which they live. They can help with the procedures of arranging housing subsidies.

There are two kinds of house subsidies: APL (Aide Personnalisee au Logement) for newly-built students' flats; and ALS (Allocation Logement a Caractere Social) for other kinds of housing, including traditional single rooms for students.

Q: I am a doctoral student in optical communications, and my dream is to continue my studies at a top university in the US. Should I apply for a master's, doctoral or postdoctoral degree? Will it be hard for a young woman of 26 like me to get a visa?

— alicelau

A: If you have got a PhD, then you should apply for a postdoctoral program in the US.

Keep in mind that your university in China should have a strong reputation in the field of optical communications and the universities in the US to which you apply will have to recognize and accept your degree.

If you have a TOEFL score over 640 and a GRE score over 1400, you may be eligible for scholarships, and many universities offer different kinds of financial support for students to engage in research.

Your age should not be a problem. However, students of scientific majors are more likely to stay in America after graduation. That can work against your visa application, because you could be seen as have a strong chance of wanting to immigrate.

(Edited by Ayi / Zhang Nan)

German Universities Ease Language Requirements

Students applying to study in Germany can take a deep breath, as a new policy has dropped the requirements for scores on the TestDaf German language proficiency examination.

Students that reach level TDN4, instead of the higher TDN5 previously required, can apply to and be accepted by

German universities, the Beijing office of German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) announced earlier this week.

TestDaf results range from TDN3 to TDN5 for all four sections of the test — reading, listening, writing and speaking.

"Different universities or majors have different re-

quirements. Some universities and majors will also accept students of TDN3, which indicates basic command of German," Benni Ni, a consultant at DAAD's local office, told *Beijing Today* Tuesday.

The new requirements take effect for applications filed for summer semester next year.

Aussies, Kiwis Forsee More Students from Beijing

Six universities from Australia and New Zealand held two small exhibitions in Beijing over the past weekend to draw more Chinese students into their 2005 courses.

The universities presented materials on 500 majors at the exhibitions, held at the offices of recognized study abroad agents

JJL Co. and China Center for International Education Exchange.

The six universities that took part were the University of Sydney, Monash University, the University of Western Australia, the University of Auckland, Auckland University of Technology and Taylors College.



Nanluogu Xiang has quietly become a fun melding of old Beijing, bohemian culture and creative cuisine.

Out from the Shadows

By Tom Spearman

It's hard not to envy people who live near Nanluogu Xiang, a narrow hutong east of Houhai and the Drum Tower. The little street, running north from Ping'an Dajie to Gulou Dongdajie, has long been familiar to foreigners thanks to the famous Pass By bar and the apartments on nearby Ju'er hutong.

But a few years ago, it didn't seem nearly so appealing. The bulldozer appeared to be closing in, the traffic was getting worse and the quiet of the hutongs had been ruined. The traffic is still there – the constant flow of vehicles coming up behind you beeping their horns still upsets the peaceful quality of the old lanes – but the air of doom that seemed to have fallen over the area has gone.

Perhaps that's because it's been discovered by rich folk wanting to renovate some of the lovely old houses here. There are certainly more Audis and BMWs parked around the place than before. But the sense of community is definitely still there, in the old guys playing chess, the *lao taitais* watching you walk past, seamstresses and *xiaomaibus*. And these days, following in the Pass By's footsteps, a dozen or so charming old buildings on Nanluogu Xiang are now open to the public in the form of cool bars, old-style cafes and simple restaurants.

Bohemian Dream Street

Seriously good coffee that's cheaper than Starbucks is available up and down the hutong. Most places open around 11 am and shut late and come in two forms: rustic old-style or smoky Bohemian cool.

A relaxing, cozy, traditional-style interior can be found at **Sandglass Cafe**. The wood floors, shelves and furniture give the place a homely feel and an old *luzi* certainly keeps it warm.

A table by one of the tall windows is an ideal place to

Luogu Xiang Restaurants:

Xinbinpeng Tel: 6402 7087 Open: 11 am - 2 am
Wenxiangqu Tel: 6406 4357 Open: 11 am - midnight
Luogu Dongtian Tel: 8402 4729 Open: 10 am - midnight

Cafes:

Sandglass Tel: 6402 3529 Open: 11 am - 1 am
Xiao Xin's Tel: 6403 6956 Open: 10 am - 1:30 am
Here Tel: 8401 4246 Open: 10 am - 1:30 am

Bars:

LL Ago Tel: 6404 9088 Open: 2 pm - 4 am
Gongdu Tel: 6401 0055 Open 12:30 am - 2 am
Backpacker's Tel: 8400 2429 Open: 7 am - midnight



Sandglass Cafe



Backpacker's



Luogu Dongtian



Here

relax and wait and wait and wait for your order to arrive (our ice cream and coffee took about 20 minutes). But the ice cream (20 yuan for two scoops) was delicious and the espresso (15 yuan) was sensational, somewhat surprisingly as the coffee machine is of fairly modest dimensions. They serve latte,



LL Ago



Gongdu



Xiao Xin's

mocha, cappuccino, Irish and other coffee styles, as well as sandwiches, salads and alcohol.

Immediately next door is **Xiao Xin's Cafe**, which offers a similar, relaxed ambience. Along with western staples like pizza and pasta and a wide selection of coffees, you can order various desserts including black forest cake, wonderful creamy, thick cheesecake and tiramisu that is nothing short of spectacular.

Some of those same cakes and pastries used to be available at **Here**, but not any more. Now Here is a self-consciously stylish and bohemian cafe-bar, offering breakfasts, sandwiches and all the usual coffees, reasonably priced at around 15 yuan. The cocktails are also pretty cheap, mostly around 20 yuan. The walls are adorned with interesting photos and artwork and film magazines are available for perusal.

If you want to drink in an actual bar, there are several atmospherically lit places along the hutong in which to hunker down. Southernmost is **Long, Long Ago Courtyard**. It's not a courtyard, but it is dead cool with alcoves downstairs and an upstairs section to chill out and smoke.

Drinks aren't cheap, but they serve Beijing draft beer for 12 yuan per pint.

Cheaper still is **Gongdu**, where classy spirits like Chivas and Glenfiddich are a mere 22 yuan for pretty generous measures. The lighting and decor are pretty weird though, so best order a double. Then there's the **Backpacker's** restaurant/bar, offering dishes like chicken curry, Thai noodles and cheap side orders, along with Tsingtao for 8 yuan and Yanjing for 3 yuan.

Family Style with Frills

The **Xinbinpeng** restaurant is an eight-year veteran of Nanluogu Xiang, and it fully deserves its loyal clientele, including students from the Central Academy of Drama across the street.

Though Xinbinpeng offers a wide range of dishes, you can't go wrong with the spicy Sichuan-style offerings, such as *yuxiang moguji* (22 yuan), tasty hunks of fried chicken (wings, according to the staff, but more like the shoulder bit) in sweet and sour tomato sauce. The sweet and sour pork (*Sichuan rouding*, 16 yuan) was crispy and delicious, with the green peppers fried just right. A bit of veggie balance came with the fried Yunnan mushrooms (*ganguo chashugu*, 22 yuan) served in an iron pot with a flame underneath keeping things warm. Though a tad stringy, the mushrooms tasted good, the sauce was delicious and it came with *mantou* arranged around the edge of the pot for soaking up all the flavor. Eyes too big, as always, we also ordered a crispy, tasty take on the Hunan staple *roumou suandoujiao* (8 yuan), or diced green beans with ground pork. Another serious bonus of Xinbinpeng is that it's open until 2 am.

A few hundred yards south of Xinbinpeng, we were surprised to walk into the **Wenxiangqu** and see people eating exactly the same dishes. The owner explained that she used to run Xinbinpeng but had turned it over to a relative earlier this year so she could open up this new joint. "The food is better here," she promised. Wenxiangqu offers a brighter, more modern interior and the prices are about the same.

A foreigner-friendly fusion restaurant with English menus, **Luogu Dongtian** is a little more expensive than the two mentioned above, but offers a stylish interior with an upstairs section and an outdoor roof terrace for warmer months.

The Hot Pot Man

A la carte left to chance: An offal mistake?

By Gareth George

Admit it. If you're a foreigner, you have feared hot pot. You've blinked at menus that look like someone's peppered them with Chinese character buckshot. And you've ordered the same old mutton/cabbage/mushroom plates with your mildly spiced broth. And you're bored.

The inevitable question is just how free is the non-Chinese reader to order from a hot pot menu at random and hope to get food that is both identifiable and appetizing?

Luke Rhinehart's book *The Diceman* describes the adventures of a man who shakes off the shackles of conformity, and the guilt and responsibility of choice, by making all his decisions with a simple six-sided die. Likewise, your intrepid investigator shrugged off the guilt and responsibility of looking like an idiot and applied the same principles to ordering hot pot.

The rules: Every dish for the hot pot was ordered at random, according to the whims of the dice. The dice was rolled for each decision made during our two meals. For ordering, one die was rolled for each section of the menu. Where there are more than six options on the menu, rollers closed their eyes and stabbed a pen into the menu before the dice roll. The number of dots listed on the die indicated the number to be counted down from the mark left by the pen. The die was rolled once for broth, once for mushrooms, then seafood, then vegetables and twice for meat.

"It's like a really big chicken. I don't know the word," said our menu translator. It took us a moment or two to realize, but the dice had ordered ostrich. The venue was a little back-alley hot pot restaurant just off Dahuisi in Haidian District. A homely place, with faded photos of donkeys and sheep in place of decor. The bar top was cluttered with musty looking carafes of pickled snake and other miscellanea that confounded us to believe this a dining area. Just the spot.

But back to the ostrich. We could have got snake. We could have got donkey. The die chose ostrich. The flaky looking, red tinged meat settled alongside the die's other choices: fresh fishballs, 'special' beef, Yunnan mushrooms and green vegetables that translated as "chicken feathers" (*jimaocai*). We were duly informed that the Yunnan mushrooms and the greens were off, and the die duly re-chose fresh tea mushrooms (*chashugu*) and tofu. The die then chose the broth, which was a thick, spicy soup with huge joints of lamb peering above the surface like meaty icebergs.

We were mildly surprised not to have ordered anything stranger. But I couldn't help feeling a tinge of excitement. I realized just how much of the hot pot experience I'd been missing. More than this, I realized that if we had all been able to read the menu,

we might have been there all day. Picture it: democratically deciding which of 40 varieties of mushroom to have? The dice, however, let anarchy reign. We learned to hang on every bounce. For every winner, whom the dice favored with a cherished dish, there was another loser.

Dinner became a game of chance. We had been "one point away from ordering eyeballs," our menu translator told me. We rolled for what we might have done with them – none of us could even countenance the idea that the cold little orbs might have made their way into the broth. There was a whole section of offal which we avoided, due as much to the amount of dishes we had as the potential for ordering something truly alien.

We began to roll for everything. Another round of beers? Ask the dice. How many? Ask the dice. The dice chose our dipping sauce, even the herbs and spices we added to it. We began to roll for what to do when the meal was over (when did the meal finish? The dice decided.) We decided to sleep in the streets, not to go home for two days, to ask directions of people then run in the opposite direction. Fortunately, the dice decided otherwise.

Here's another revelation: the food was really good. It was twice as pricey as usual – the dice have expensive taste – but we sampled some unusual combinations and there was nothing that went untried. If you can read the headings of the food sections, then you can avoid anything you really can't stomach (like stomach, in my case.) If not, then as long as you spread the rolls around and don't mind spending more than usual, you can still have a really exciting meal.

Rhinehart started the dice experiments because he was suffering from mental illness. He was a man of murderous urges. In his role as a psychiatrist, it concerned him that he was encouraged to express and accept his inner desires, just not to act them out.

Hot pot is, like many winter warmers, a safe food. You know what you're going to get. If this winter, you feel like expressing your inner chaos, while enjoying a meal that's a real social occasion, you could make a worse choice. Or maybe you'd better let the dice decide. Still wondering what we might have done with the eyeballs? The dice told me not to tell...

Two restaurants served as the guinea pigs for this article:

Haiyang Hot Pot

Where: Zhongguancun Nandajie, Weigongcun Dahuisi No. 8, Guojia Haiyang Yubao Zhongxin Yuannei, Haidian **Tel:** 6210 5638 **Open:** 8:30 am - 11:30 pm **Total cost with drinks:** 40 yuan per person

Yangdudu Shuanrou

Where: Zaojunmiaojia No. 14, Haidian **Tel:** 6296 8881 **Open:** 10 am - 11 pm **Total cost:** 44 yuan per person.

Special thanks go to the understanding and tolerant staff at both restaurants.



Lots of Hot Pot: Thousands dugged in to massive hot pots during a food festival in Chongqing on October 16. Though in marginally more control of their fare, like the die-wielding writer above, they must have got more than they bargained for.

Photo by Photocome



Xining jian ruanji (lemon chicken, 24 yuan) at Luogu Dongtian

Photos by Li Shuzhuan

Personal Classifieds

Accommodation

Brand new two-bedroom apartment for rent. A newly renovated two-bedroom suite over 140 square meters, located two subway stops from the World Trade Center area in a multinational community, is available for rent. Gyms, clubs, swimming pools and tennis court available. The owners are looking for a responsible long-term renter. The suite can be full, semi or non-furnished. 6,800 yuan, or \$850 per month. Contact: susan_x@sina.com

Two bedroom, one living room apartment near Ritan Lu. Home appliances, furnishing available. 62 square meters. 2,500 yuan per month. Contact: Ms. Zhao, 13717871041

Language Exchange

A Chinese girl who graduated from university this year, majoring in English, would like to find a native English speaker as a language partner. Contact: kathy124happy@yahoo.com.cn

Jane, an editor in Beijing with a bachelor's degree in literature and language, is hoping to meet a foreigner who wants to learn Chinese. Native English speaker preferred. Contact: yuanjane789@yahoo.com.cn

Professional Help

Guo Yueqing, with two years' experience in foreign enterprises, wants to find a part-time job in the administrative field, such as a secretary, administration assistant or receptionist. Contact: 13522968707

A 25-year-old female, English trading major with over 3 years' work experience as an English interpreter and consultant, is looking for a full-time job. She is fluent in oral and written English with good communication ability and has extensive knowledge of Microsoft Office. Contact: 13611016592 or email: jlxxdb@126.com

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Music



Jolin Tsai Beijing Concert

Taiwan Queen of pop Jolin Tsai vows to turn the upcoming Beijing solo concert into a real party.

Where: Beijing Workers Gymnasium, Chaoyang **When:** Saturday, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 200-1,280 yuan **Tel:** 6417 7845



Hanson Brothers Asian Tour Beijing Concert

Hanson are three brothers born and raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Hanson in 1997 had their breakthrough hit "MmmBop."

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theatre, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng **When:** Sunday 7:30 pm **Admission:** 100-600 yuan **Tel:** 6835 4455



Exhibitions

Sun Huili Solo Exhibition

Sun Huili has made a successful transition from a simple style at the beginning of her career to maturity that enables her to maintain the nature of print. Her unique personal style and unusual printmaking technique fill her works with a distinguished woman's thought, leading people into a peaceful inner world all her own.

Where: New Millennium Gallery, Diyang Building, 2 Dongsanhuan Beilu **When:** December 4-16, daily 9 am – 6 am **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8453 6193



New Wave

China Art Seasons presents New Wave, a group exhibition featuring 14 artists who are the next generation of Chinese contemporary artists who will be creating a wave in the emerging Chinese contemporary art movement. Each armed with a distinct style, this new wave of artists are expected to become some of the names that will mark the new generation of artists in the Chinese contemporary art movement.

Where: 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** opens December 4, daily 11 am – 7 pm (except Monday) **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6431 1900

Modern Ink-and-wash

Using colorful and extremely complicated brushwork, Yang Ermin expresses his personal exploration into the essence of contemporary ink-and-wash paintings. Living in Japan for about 10 years, Yang has developed his unique style by combining traditional Chinese style with Western Impressionism. His works have been shown in France, Germany and Italy.

Where: Yanhuang Art Gallery, 9 Huizhong Lu, Chaoyang **When:** daily 9 am – 4 pm until December 6 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6491 3171



Towards the Fading Aura – Zhang Jianbo's Solo Exhibition

Through exceedingly complicated brushwork and in an extraordinarily succinct and abstract language, Zhang Jianbo explores the essence of contemporary art as well as his pursuit of inspiration via Walter Benjamin.

Where: Creation Art Gallery, north end of Ritan Lu, Chaoyang **When:** December 4-12, daily 10:30 am – 8 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8561 7570



Poetry and Romance

Modern oil paintings by Ji Xiaofeng, who depicts modern life through people living around her.

Where: Qin Gallery, 1-1 E, Huaweili, Enjoy Paradise, Chaoyang **When:** daily 9:30 am – 5 pm until December 15 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0461

Movies



Vajont

On October 9, 1963, at 10:39 pm, 260 million cubic meters of rock fell from Mount Toc into the artificial lake formed by the Vajont Dam. The landslide created a 250-meter wave and 50 million cubic meters of water flooded the towns below, killing more than 2,000 people.

After the accident, journalist Tina Merlin tried for years to denounce the dam and the failures of corrupt politicians and workers in charge of dam construction. Directed by Renzo Martinelli, starring Laura Morante, Michael Serrault and Daniel Auteuil. In Italian with English subtitles.

Where: Italian Embassy, 2 Dong'erjie, Sanlitun **When:** December 9, 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2187

Two Great Sheep (Liang Zhi Mianyang)

An old farmer living on the outskirts of a remote village is sent two rare foreign sheep by the leaders of the municipality to improve the old farmer's life and the village's meager economy. Deshan thus becomes the

talk of the community, the lucky chosen one, the custodian of the village's heart of gold. But capricious sheep require fancy food and specialized daily care – more than Deshan would have envisioned for the children he has never had. In Chinese with English subtitles.

Where: Cherry Lane Movie Theater, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** 8 pm, tonight and Saturday **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 13501251303



A World without Thieves

The story highlights Shan Gen, who falls in love with a female thief. But he quickly discovers that the object of his affection has a husband, also a thief. In typical Feng Xiaogang fashion, the married couple do all they can to protect Shan Gen, who is totally naive. Hong Kong pop king Andy Lau portrays the male thief, while Taiwan star Rene Liu plays the role of the female thief. Directed by Feng Xiaogang, starring Andy Lau, Rene Liu, Ge You and Li Bingbing.

Where: UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Shuangyushu Kexueyuan, Haidian **When:** opens December 9 **Tel:** 6261 2851

Jams



DJ Seb Fontaine

From Ibiza and West London, DJ Seb Fontaine combines ska, hip-hop, rare groove and acid.

Where: Club Tango, 79 Heping-li Xijie **When:** Friday, 10 pm **Admission:** 200 yuan **Tel:** 6428 2288

Activities

Workshop: Green Tea and Intellectual Tea Ceremony

Come learn how to brew green tea and get the chance to taste thereof the most famous brands. Appreciate the graceful dance and complicated rituals of an intellectual tea ceremony.

Where: Chinese Culture Club, 29 Anjialou, Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** Saturday, 4 pm **Admission:** 60 yuan **Tel:** 8851 4913

BJ Hikers – Triangle Hike

Mostly downhill walking this hike, with a panoramic view promised.

Where: Changping County, north of Beijing **When:** Sunday, pick up at 8:30 am at the Lido outside of Starbucks **Cost:** 150 yuan for adults, 100 yuan for children under 12 **Tel:** 13910025516

TV and Radio Highlights

HBO	
3 Friday	
Red Dragon	11 pm
4 Saturday	
The Quick and The Dead	11 pm
5 Sunday	
Kangaroo	11 pm
6 Monday	
Enough	9 pm
7 Tuesday	
Doc Hollywood	8:30 pm
8 Wednesday	
Minority Report	9 pm
9 Thursday	
Bad Boyz II	9 pm
CCTV-9	
Monday – Friday	
Around China	6:30 am
Culture Express	8:30 am
Nature and Science / Chinese Civilization	11:30 am
Culture Express	2:30 pm
Nature and Science / Chinese Civilization	5:30 pm
Dialogue	7:30 pm
News Updates / Asia Today	8 pm
Sports Scene	11:15 pm
Saturday	
Travelogue	9:30 am
Center Stage	11:30 am
Sunday	
Sports Weekend	10 am
Documentary	10:30 am
This Week	12:30 am
China Radio International 91.5 FM	
Monday – Friday	
Easy FM Afternoon	2-7 pm
Fun in Beijing	5-5:30 pm
Joy FM	9:05-11 pm
Saturday	
Music Memories	8:05-11 am
Euro Hit 40	12:05-1 pm
Musique Sans Frontières	6:05-8 pm
Joy FM	9:05-11 pm
Sunday	
Music Memories	8:05-11 am
Jazz Beat	6:05-8 pm
Joy FM	9:05-11 pm

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By Zhang Jianzhong

Happy Moments

By Arron Chang & Hester Xu
No matter how devoted you are to city living, sometimes it simply gets to be a matter of necessity to escape and unwind with a little mountain air. The problem for Beijingers is that actually getting out of and back into the city is often more stressful than coping with rush hour traffic. Anyone who has spent a few hours stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic on the dreaded Badaling Expressway on a Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon is familiar with the danger.

Heading north out the Miyun Highway to the mountains of Huairou District is one alternative less likely to result in a traffic-induced ulcer.

As soon as you hit the mountain road, starting from the Yanqi roundabout just outside Huairou, towering poplars begin to give way to lush hillsides reaching up to a bright, blue sky. Even the railings of the bridges, painted in an eye-catching bright yellow are refreshingly different.

Huairou is no ordinary countryside. While most locals still make a living by growing crops and raising livestock, many of the families living along the road supplement their income by offering accommodation and home cooking to tourists, providing a comfortable and inexpensive alternative to the local restaurants, hotels and newly opened tourist resorts.

Mountain resorts

Only 8 kilometers out of Huairou, **Yanqi (Wild Geese) Lake** lays conveniently between the mountain road to the west and National Highway 111 to the east. The small lake is surrounded by mountains on three sides and is the home to large flocks of migrating wild geese and white cranes during spring. A section of the Great Wall overlooks the lake on the north-west side, with 18 watch towers.

After driving for another 10 minutes, you will come to **Shentangyu** (Valley of the Divine Hall), named for a fortress that was built there in the Ming Dynasty (1367-1627). This was one of the first areas developed for tourism by the local government, and it boasts a variety of attractions including mountain scenery, rivers, natural ponds and a small section of the Great Wall. Another distinctive feature is a line of stone houses built along the hillside by the side of the trail leading to the valley.

Traditional and modern delights

A few kilometers past Shentangyu, you will come to the Changyuan River running by the road on the right, which is a popular rainbow trout fishing spot. In fact the trout are not native to the river, but are bred at a local fish farm.

Behind a three-storey brick building and a few bungalows along the river, dozens of turret like wooden houses nestle on the southern side of a small hill. This is **Mountain Bar**, a popular base for backpackers, which somewhat resembles a small ethnic minority village in the mountains of southwest China.

Crossing a wooden arched bridge over the river near a small waterfall, you are immediately greeted by the main entrance of the restaurant bar under a roofed wooden porch. You can book a room in one of the cosy wooden cabins on the hillside or an upstairs suite if you care to stay for the night.

Having lunch in Mountain Bar is part of the fun. All



Nali restaurant and guesthouse

in Rainbow Trout Valley

the food is organic and the tableware is heavily glazed and hand-painted in the traditional way. The osmanthus flower tea is especially appetizing and the farmhouse dishes are simple and tasty. Rainbow trout sushi with soybean sauce and mustard is a speciality.

There seems to be no apparent reason why **Nali**, another restaurant hotel just a few meters away from Mountain Bar, should be given the English name Fairyland, but its ultra-modern fish-shaped main building stand out from the country style houses nearby. The river narrows in front of Fairyland and is renamed Lianhuaxi (Lotus Creek). Perching over the creek, the glass and steel structure of the restaurant looks like a huge section of a wing ready to take flight in the wind. The menu is a mixture of Chinese and western style, but visitors are tempted to linger in the restaurant just to enjoy the tranquillity of watching clouds floating high above the glass ceiling. If Ikea furnishings represent your idea of style and modernity, this is the place for you.

All roads lead to the Great Wall

There is actually more to do here than can be squeezed into an afternoon, so you are going to have to rule out one or two options. Just be sure to leave yourself enough time for a visit to the Great Wall. You can make your own decision as to whether to stop by at **Zhihuigu** (Wisdom Valley), where dozens of types of fruit trees and crops are planted and many wild animals find their natural habitat, but driving across the mountains along the winding road provides its own delights. Huge boulders on the mountain side shine in the sun, yellowing leaves sway with the branches of the trees; blue smoke curls into the sky from farmhouse chimneys, horses and donkeys graze lazily by the roadside and the occasional group of backpackers can be seen slowly making their way towards some unknown destination.

You can pick up some tasty hiking supplies such as hick-



Map and photos by Arron Chang

ories, persimmons and chestnuts from the vendors by the road. Look out for Badaohe Bridge, where you should take a left turn. There you will spot a small shop – you can't miss it, as "shop" is written in both Chinese and English, along with a sign "Go to Jiankou." Now you are on the only trail leading to this particular section of the Great Wall. If you're not sure

about the way, the locals are friendly enough and generally willing to point visitors in the right direction.

The **Jiankou** Great Wall is built on one of the most mountainous, and scenic, areas in the vicinity of Beijing. A checkpoint was set up in the Ming Dynasty at a fort to question people intending to cross the wall into China, thus the name Jiankou. However,

the locals will tell you that the most special part of the Wall is Beijing Jie (Knot), where three sections of wall join at the peak of a mountain.

The trail abruptly ends at the village of Xizhazi under the Jiankou Great Wall. Unless you're a professional climber and properly equipped, don't even think about trying to climb this section of wall alone! Find Lao Zhao, a local peasant, who will tell you what you will need. Affectionately called the "home of photographers," Lao Zhao's home has become a de facto base camp and supply station for many photographers and climbers.

But it does seem true that all roads lead to the Great Wall. Making some enquiries in the car park, you may find another route going to the Great Wall not far from the village. Driving back for a few minutes and turning onto an unpaved road, you will soon come to a rough car parking area hewn out of the trees at the foot of the mountains. The Great Wall can be seen above, snaking along the top of the ridges. From there it is only a 15-minute walk to reach the nearest battlement of the wall. From there it takes about one and half hours to reach the highest watchtower in sight.

It is a difficult and dangerous climb, requiring the use of all four limbs, as the wall has partly collapsed and is very steep in several places. But the view from the top of the last watchtower of mountains on all sides, distant grey patches of villages and the thin, white line that is a crooked road going through them and extending beyond the distant valley makes the effort well worthwhile.

It might have grown dark by the time you return to the car park at the foot of the mountain, but the car park attendant keeper, a local peasant, will most likely offer to take you to Xizhazi, a nearby village. One of the homes in the village that takes in guests is called Huzijia (Huzi's Home). You may enjoy the novelty of sleeping on a *huokang*, a traditional heated brick bed in a sepa-

rate room with your companion (no many how many of them and whoever they are), and dining with the family. The bed is hard but kept warm by coal fire all night; the dumplings are handmade, sometimes with the help of the guests and the corn flour for the porridge and buns is newly ground.

Long road home

To take the long way back to Beijing next morning, head north along the mountain road from Badaohe Bridge. The **Lianquan Xianggu** is only 3 or 4 kilometers from here. Stop for a stroll in this beautifully named valley along a winding 5,000-meter trail paved with white marble and get yourself totally lost in the resounding melody of swift torrents of small springs and waterfalls coming down the mountains and the soothing fragrance of nameless flowers. You will easily connect its name to the original meaning – "resounding valley of the springs."

Bidding farewell to the valley and continuing north for about 10 kilometers, you will finally come to a junction where the mountain road joins Yanliu Road, another major road joining up with National Highway 111 ten kilometers to the east. Turning south at the junction of the highway and driving another 10 kilometers will bring you abreast with the **Yunmengshan** (Cloud Covered Mountains) National Forest Park. Known as the 'small Yellow Mountain,' this scenic park is a perfect place to wind up your holiday with its strange shaped pine trees and stones, mountain caves, rare plants, tumbling waterfalls and changing clouds.

Tips:

Unless you are prepared to stay for more a few days, set out early in the morning in order to leave enough time to climb the Great Wall.

A standard double room is 180-220 yuan at Mountain Bar and 280 yuan at Fairyland. Discounts are usually available from Sunday to Thursday.

Accommodation in a farmhouse is only 10 yuan a night. Ask for a clean quilt and check to see if they have a shower.



One of Mountain Bar's wood cabin guesthouses